



BLOOD AND SAND:

The Arena Combat Sourcebook



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BLOOD AND SAND: THE ARENA COMBAT SOURCEBOOK

WRITTEN BY

Chris A. Field

COVER ART

Pollice Verso, 1872

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

Louis Porter, Jr. Design

LOUIS PORTER, JR. DESIGN

5580 SW 97th Terrace

Cooper City, FL 33328

LMPjr007@aol.com

www.lpjdesign.com

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The fans cheer when you score a hit, and lay open a man's breast with the well honed edge of your sword. The mob roars with laughter as a condemned heretic armed only with a child's wooden sword dies beneath the fangs of a lion. The arena itself seems to tremble with excited shouts when you put your sandaled foot onto the neck of a defeated fellow gladiator, and lift your eyes and blade to the skyboxes, to learn whether you will spare or execute your defeated rival.

Step onto the arena's sand, still stinking of blood and spilt shit from the last match. Raise your sword high in salute to your master and the Emperor who commissioned these games. Size up your opponent, gauge the strength in his muscles, the flexibility in his limbs, his familiarity with the net and trident. Fight well, die with courage, and be remembered forever... or at least until a new champion wins the fickle hearts of the mob.

In our safe and comfortable world, the glory and horror of the arena died with the Roman Empire. Many of those who fought and died in the Coliseum or myriad lesser arenas the length and breadth of the Empire were specially trained slaves or condemned criminals. Others were free men (and even in extraordinary circumstances, free women) who threw away their legal rights and social standing as Roman citizens for a chance at fame and glory in the arena. Whether free or slave, gladiators were the grandest celebrities of the ancient world. They fought for the masses, and when they died, if they died well, they might achieve a kind of grim respect or heroic acclaim.

THE GLADIATORS OF ROME

"Flamma, secutor. Lived 30 years, fought 34 times, won 21 times, fought to a draw 9 times, defeated 4 times, a Syrian by nationality. Delicatus made this for his deserving comrade-in-arms." -Inscription on a Roman-era headstone in Sicily.

In our world, the gladiatorial tradition spanned at least eight centuries.

According to Roman historians themselves, the first great gladiatorial games were held in 310 BCE, by the Campanians to celebrate a great military victory, with the first Roman games more than fifty years later. Other contemporary sources, and modern historians theorize the games were much older than that, and began as a kind of blood sacrifice made during the funerals of important men. Skilled slave warriors gave their lives to pay the toll for their master's passage to another world. The Etruscans were said to accompany their funerals with great games a full century before the Roman historian Livy's dating of the first games at 310 BCE.

As the centuries wore down, the practice of gladiatorial munera (funeral rite) fell by the wayside, and gladiatorial games became theater for the masses, the primary form of entertainment for Roman and non-citizens alike. Wealthy private citizens and Roman politicians alike hosted ever more complex and thrilling spectacles, knowing that their generosity in providing free games would be rewarded with votes and public support. Roman citizens, rich and poor alike, flocked to their local arenas to watch single combat, grand melees, charioteers racing and battling, and even recreations of historical battles.

At their peak, Roman gladiatorial games were a way of showing Roman strength and military prowess. The various 'classes' of gladiators, each with their own unique fighting style were based on the tactics of Rome's enemies. As Roman territory expanded and the diversity of its subject population increased, so too did the complexity of the gladiatorial games themselves. Highly theatrical and as stylized as modern WWE bouts, gladiator shows matched exotically armed and armored barbarians against other gladiators representative of the Roman Legion's strength and discipline. Gladiators whose fighting styles were standards for Samnites, Gauls, Celts or other valiant 'barbarians' were added to the cast of the games as the years wore down. Gladiators fighting in foreign styles often wore foreign armor captured by Rome in its many expansionist campaigns.

A succession of Emperors used increasingly expensive and flamboyant games to buy public support. In addition to the games themselves, their festivals were state holidays providing other entertainments in the form of dancers, musicians and theatrical performances. The poor were given meat and other rare treats during or after the games. Roman politicians quickly learned that to stay in office, they had to provide the citizenry with spectacles. Some games were legendary in their excess: a three day festival in 216 BCE with twenty two pairs of gladiators was topped in 183 BCE by a series of battles involving more than 120 gladiators and even more lavish acts of public charity.

In 65 BCE, Julius Caesar outdid all previous politicians by hosting games involving more than 320 warriors, all outfitted in elaborate silver armor. Such an outlay nearly bankrupted the newly crowned Emperor. Though Caesar publicly justified the lavish spectacle as a munus to his father, two decades in his grave, those alive at the time realized that the games were only an excuse to drum up public support. The older religious connotations associated with the gladiatorial games were all but forgotten, and the games became politically motivated street theater.

TIMELINE:

310 BCE. *The Campanians celebrate a victory over the Samnites with proto-gladiatorial competitions.*

264 BCE. *Decimus Iunius Brutus Scaeva has three gladiator pairs fight to the death in the Roman Forum to commemorate victories in the First Punic war and honor his deceased father.*

216 BCE. *Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, former consul, was honored by his sons with three days of games in the Roman Forum as a funeral rite, beginning the Roman tradition of gladiator munera*

183 BCE. *Another munus is held to honor Publius Licinius, which includes more than one hundred and twenty gladiators and the distribution of food to the poor.*

105 BCE. *Rome's ruling consuls offer the first state-sponsored gladiatorial bout using gladiators from Capua. Aurelius Scaurus is appointed head of the first gladiator school (ludi) at Capua.*

73-71 BCE. *The gladiator Spartacus leads a failed rebellion against the Roman state, eventually dying in battle at Oliveto Citra. 6,000 rebels are crucified by the victorious General Crassus for their part in the revolt.*

65 BCE. *Julius Caesar hosts the most elaborate and expensive gladiatorial games to date, involving more than 320 pairs of gladiators wearing elaborate silver armor.*

65-63 BCE. *Anti-corruption laws limits the size of gladiatorial stables, when where and how often state-sponsored games may occur; and the restricts the budget allotted to the games. These laws are all but useless and widely ignored.*

19 CE. *Larinius issues an edit preventing recruitment and training of female citizens, especially the daughters of the upper class, as gladiators. As with many bans on gladiatorial combat, this new law had little effect.*

57 CE. *Emperor Nero orders the construction of a wooden auditorium in Rome itself to hold the games. Eventually this temporary structure collapses, killing many.*

Caesar's great games spurred anti-corruption laws enacted to curb state spending on these games. Faced with the public's zealous fascination with the games, the laws had little effect, and were mostly ignored, even as the Roman Empire began its decline. State sponsored games were only to be held in honor the state-sponsored Imperial cult, allowing the Emperor alone to win public support by hosting great games. According to the laws, great games were restricted to Imperial holidays such as Saturnalia and Quinquatria, and the maximum costs of such gladiatorial bouts was fixed.

THE CHRISTIAN ERA

"Like Judaism, Christianity was a religion of the One God. Jews and Christians were equally determined to refrain from participation in the cult rituals of Rome's pagan civic religion." -James Carroll, Constantine's Sword

As the new Christian cult established itself in Rome, Christian martyrs supplemented Jews as common victims of the arena- noxio to be executed by man or beast for the amusement of the mob. Noxio were the lowest class of Roman criminals, those 'obnoxious to the state', a classification which included political dissidents and traitors... and Abrahamic monotheists who refused to sacrifice or honor Roman gods.

As Rome faded, ever more impressive spectacles kept the population docile. Between 108 and 109 CE, the Emperor Trajan celebrated his victories in Dracia with more than a 100 days of games involving a full army's worth of gladiators- more than 10,000 slave-warriors. With Trajan's flagrant and obvious defiance of the old anti-corruption laws, new laws were again enacted to curb gladiatorial excesses. Again, such laws were ignored. In 177 CE, Marcus Aurelius again tried to reform the games, but upon his death, his son Commodus (whose exploits in the 2000 film Gladiator, unbelievable as they were, only hinted at his true insanity) again began hosting games topping even Trajan's.

During the second and third century of the Christian Era, the gladiatorial bouts became seemingly the only facet of Roman culture not affected by the chaotic death throes of the emperor. When Diocletian took the crown in 284 CE, Rome had suffered under a rapid succession of idiot rulers, twenty would-be Emperors in almost as many years. In 285 CE, Diocletian took desperate measures to save his culture, effectively carving Rome in half and choosing to rule only the more stable, prosperous portion, leaving the rest to barbarism.

In 312 CE, Constantine, who had been a general when Rome was halved, took control of what remained of the Empire. After a series of military victories that taxed his

military resources at the same time they affirmed them, Constantine sought to unify and strengthen his newly won Empire. Finally legalizing the practice Christianity the official state religion, Constantine all but ended the death of Christians as noxii in the arena. Ten years after coming to power, Constantine ostensibly banned gladiatorial combats as state-sponsored entertainment.

“In times in which peace and peace relating to domestic affairs prevail bloody demonstrations displease us. Therefore, we order that there may be no more gladiator combats. Those who were condemned to become gladiators for their crimes are to work from now on in the mines. Thus they pay for their crimes without having to pour their blood. -A proclamation by Emperor Constantine, 325 CE

As had proved the habit of earlier rulers, Constantine eventually ignored his own decree and hosted munera of his own later in his reign. In 393 CE, Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official state religion and banned all pagan festivals. At this point, all religious trappings associated with the games were burnt away. The games themselves, continued in gradually diminishing form until the collapse of the Empire itself. By the time the Dark Ages truly began, the great gladiatorial games of Rome were a mythical part of a half-erased past.

INFAMA

From the moment they first have a sword or spear thrust into their hands, a slave gladiator was outside and apart from Roman society. Gladiators, whether free or slave, were considered infama- infamous. The worst criminals in Roman society could be declared gladiators, and even particularly notorious Roman citizens could be stripped of their citizenship and thrown into the arena. Traitors to the Empire in all their many forms became gladiators, as did captured soldiers of other nations. Being taken alive was an affront to Roman honor, so a life sentence as a gladiator, and the bare hope of winning freedom was considered a great mercy.

Free men and women who chose to become gladiators were called auctorati, and their decision stripped them of the social standing and legal protection afforded to all Roman citizens. Once a man became a gladiator, he became a slave, and could be beaten, whipped, branded or murdered by his master. But unlike slave gladiators, auctorati were held to an exactly worded contract, which spelled out exactly their term of service, the style they would fight in, and the payment they would accrue with each victory.

TIMELINE:

80 CE. *The Roman Coliseum is inaugurated by Titus, and its opening is celebrated with 100 days of games. Domitian will later build an elaborate substructure beneath the Coliseum to allow fighters and beasts to be lifted into the arena via a complex pulley-driven elevator system.*

108-109 CE. *Emperor Trajan celebrates military victories against Dacia with the largest games to date, involving more than 10,000 gladiators in games spanning over 100 days.*

167 CE. *Marcus Aurelius inducts several gladiators at his own expense into the Roman Legion to act as personal bodyguards.*

177 CE. *Marcus Aurelius again attempts to curb the excesses of the gladiatorial games, to little success.*

200 CE. *Emperor Setimus Severus again attempted to outlaw female gladiators.*

285 CE. *Shortly after coming to power, Emperor Diocletian halves the Roman Empire.*

365 CE. *Valentinian I fines a judge who sentences Roman Christians to the arena.*

393 CE. *Emperor Theodosius officially makes Christianity the state religion and bans pagan festivals.*

399 CE. *Honorius closes the last remaining gladiatorial schools (ludi).*

438 CE. *Valentinian III officially reaffirms the ban on pagan festivals, including gladiatorial munera.*

To mark their status as gladiators, most were branded, tattooed or scarred. Designs etched into the hands, shoulders and face were equally common, at least until Constantine outlawed the facial scarring (stigma) of criminals and slaves in 325 CE.

While free and well trained slave gladiators at least had a chance in the arena those condemned as noxii had virtually none. Enemies of the Empire were tossed into the arena unarmed and unarmored, facing wild beasts and well equipped gladiators in intentionally one-sided battles. These fights were little more than prolonged and gory executions, and were effectively the undercard of the games, short and bloody appetizers before the really interesting bouts began.

BLOOD & SAND: THE GLADIATOR SOURCEBOOK

A few gladiators won their freedom, though they were still infama and outside polite society. Most though, died in the arena. In death, the warriors were as unwelcome as they were in life. Fallen celebrity battlers might receive a funeral as elaborate as any military hero could expect, but the common gladiator was quickly buried in a segregated graveyard far from civilization. In death, gladiators would not be allowed to defile the burial grounds of those they entertained. Slain noxii in their legions were denied even the rudimentary burial poor gladiators received- their corpses were usually dumped in middens or a convenient river. To the Romans, such a lack of respect for the corpse guaranteed that it would be condemned to wander the earth as a lemure, compounding the noxio's punishment for all eternity.

LIFE AND DEATH OF A GLADIATOR

During the height of the games, gladiators were quartered and trained in special schools, or ludi. Typically, a ludi is a barracks like structure built around a central courtyard that served as the school's main practice arena. The entire one or two story structure is protected behind thick walls and a stout gate in hopes of preventing escapes. The practice arena was usually ringed with its own seating to allow fans to watch their favorite gladiators train. Gladiators were segregated into rigid castes within the school. Different styles of gladiator rarely trained together or interacted, and were barracked in separate wings of the ludi. Half prison and half dojo, discipline at the ludi was harsh and occasionally fatal. Even formerly free fighters, once they have become gladiator, may be punished as harshly as the master of the school feels necessary.

In Rome, gladiators were fed a primarily vegetarian diet, in hopes of toughening the fighters. Their high-fat diet armored the warriors beneath a layer of fat, making slashes bloodier and

more spectacular but actually protecting the muscle and organs beneath the skin. Most gladiators drank foul concoctions consisting of ash and charcoal to strengthen their bones.

Gladiators trained constantly, first alone and then sparring with weighted wooden practice weapons. Initial combat training usually included mastering the forms and motions of armed combat, practicing the dance-like moves until they became instinctive. A good portion of the training was psychological, conditioning the warriors not to fear death, and if defeated to offer their necks boldly for the killing stroke.

When a gladiator finally entered the arena, it was to great fanfare even in smaller venues. A retinue of performer and minstrels entered the arena ahead of the fighters, including performers dressed as various gods to enact brief and familiar dramas. The master of the games entered, and would act as a referee and showman, displaying the gladiator's weapons to the crowd as the fighters entered. The master of games (or editor) would often use a long staff to separate grappling fighters from his box above the killing floor, and with a gesture, determine if a fallen gladiator was to be executed or spared to fight another day.

Bouts were as interesting and colorful as their financiers could make them. In addition to one on one battles, gladiators might spar in mass brawls as teams, or engage in free-for-all grand melees, where many fighters battled until only one was left standing. Gladiators might face exotic beasts like elephants, rhinoceros lions or tigers either alone or in groups. Simulated forests and battlefields with complex terrain may be built on the arena floor, to turn an ordinary brawl into a harrowing hunt. In some arenas, the entire killing floor could be flooded to simulate ship-to-ship battles to the death.

LUST

"Steel is what they fall in love with." -Juvenal, Satires VI

Gladiatorial games became the center of a web of sexuality and passion. Even the homeliest, most hideously scarred fighter could find a willing girl or a willing boy after a bout, as his tastes dictated. Gladiators were the greatest celebri-



ties of the ancient world, and attracted a devoted clique of groupies and hangers on. The sexual prowess of gladiators was legendary, and a common subject for tavern gossip. Surviving graffiti from Pompeii describes the prowess and endowments of long dead fighters in glowing terms.

The blood and semen of slain gladiators were potent magical charms, as were any mementoes taken from the blood-soaked arena sand. The wealthiest ladies of Rome would pay exorbitant sums to slave-masters for a chance to lie with champion gladiators. Lovers groped one another in the stands as the games rolled on, and the misanthropic Juvenal flatly stated that witnessing a gladiator fight or an execution did more to loosen a girl's inhibitions than a bottle of wine. As much as they embodied violence gladiators were sex.

GLADIATRIX

Female gladiators, like other female warriors of the ancient world, were probably more common than contemporary fiction imagines, though never as numerous as their male counterparts. The exact role gladiatrix played in the arena is disputed. Were the women effectively lethal strippers, a tease for a lust crazed crowd before the killing began? Or were female gladiators the equal of their male counterparts?

What is known is that a bout between female gladiators was a rare treat, a big draw and often a novelty act. Emperor Domitian favored matches between gladiatrix and heavily armed dwarves, earning infamy of his own for his odd sense of humor. Female gladiators usually fought after dark, by the light of torches and the Roman moon. Unlike males, gladiatrix usually fought lightly armored, and often unhelmed- showing off their beauty for the crowd. Some battled topless, though a pair of gladiatrix depicted in a mosaic at Pompeii protected themselves behind heavy armor and tower shields.

For poor women, the dangers of the arena were a way to survive, or a way to achieve fame and glory otherwise denied them. For the well-off, training (if not actually dueling) as a gladiator was a popular fad, one common enough to incite the moral outrage of Rome's peevish old men.

"How can a woman be decent?

Sticking her head in a helmet, denying the sex she was born with?

Manly feats they adore, but they wouldn't want to be men,

Hear her grunt and groan as she works at it, parrying, thrusting;

See her neck bent down under the weight of her helmet.

Look at the rolls of bandage and tape, so her legs look like tree-trunks." -Juvenal, Satires VI

EQUAL AND OPPOSITE

Gladiators were rarely matched against other fighters who'd trained in their own style. Such matches were considered too boring. Instead, gladiators were matched against opponents whose styles were a good match of theirs. Lightly armed but nimble fighters were pitted against heavily armed but slow moving behemoths, so their diversity of approaches would amuse the mob.

Rome's gladiators could be divided into several distinct styles. Once a gladiator began fighting in a particular style, he or she was married to it until death or freedom. Auctorati could ostensibly choose their style, picking one that played to their strengths, but prisoners of war and slaves were given no such choice. If they received any training or equipment at all, it was what their master thought would be most entertaining for the crowd. Fans usually favored a single style of gladiators, and they cheered for gladiators fighting in that technique as ardently as modern soccer fans cheer for their favorite club.

Andabata: These fighters battled handicapped by a helmet so strangely designed it was nearly a blindfold. They were equipped similarly to a secutor, otherwise. Those who survived more than a single match were skillful, perceptive fighters to be feared. Monks and rogues who've mastered Blindfight, as well as gladiators who've angered their owners, are often forced to become andabata.

Beastarii: Beast fighters specialize in slaughtering impressive beasts for the entertainment of the crowd. These fights may be simple brawls or might be elaborate staged hunts in a false forest built on the arena floor. Their equipment and armor may be similar to another class of gladiators but these fighters rarely match their weapons against other men. Rangers and low level druids usually fight as beastarii.

Dimachaerus: This agile fighter was equipped similarly to a secutor, but instead of a shield carried a sword in each hand. This fighter focused on a lethal offense and pressed the attack against heavily armored foes. Rangers and rogues make the best dimachaerus.

Essedarius: These gladiators fought from war chariots and were modeled on the fighting style of the Celts. They usually used spears, javelins and other thrusting weapons but little armor. Equites were similar gladiators who fought from horseback. These mounted warriors are often fighters

or paladins, and occasionally rangers who've focused on the Mounted Combat feat tree.

Hoplomachus: These unarmored or lightly armored gladiators fought with a spear, javelin or other thrusting weapon and carried a small round shield. They were usually matched up against slower and heavier fighters. Barbarians, monks and unlucky rogues are usually kitted out as hoplomachus.

Laquearii: These fast, lightly armored troops used a lasso or whip to trip, entangle and eventually garrote their opponent, and may also carry a dagger or short sword for up-close blood letting. Rogues and monks usually take up this class, though a few highly specialized fighters also become laquearii.

Murmillo: Heavily armored, this fighter was protected by a stifling helmet with a fishlike crest. They fought with heavy weapons but were relatively encumbered by their bulky armor. They were often matched against secutor and retiarius. Fighters and paladins most often fight in this class.

Retiarius: This fighter was unarmored save for shoulder armor on his left side and carried a net and trident with which to ensnare and then skewer his opponent. Fast moving, this class of gladiator was often matched against the secutor. Retiarius are almost exclusively barbarians, though occasionally a monk or especially nimble rogue fights in this style.

Sagittarius: These unarmored or lightly armored archers fought with bow and arrow and tried to keep their opponents at a distance. Velites used a similar tactic with slings and thrown javelins and other missiles. Rangers and archery focused fighters take up one of these two classes.

Secutor: This type of gladiator fought in light or medium armor and a long oval shield and a gladius, using equipment and tactics similar to those displayed by Roman Legionnaires. Rogues and most fighters take up this most common class of gladiators.

Thraex: Lightly armored, a thraex carried a scimitar and a small shield, often square. They often battled murmillo. Rogues, barbarians and even the occasionally druid all become thraex.

SPELLCASTERS: SORCERERS & WIZARDS

Spellcasting gladiators can be a huge draw; having a wizard or sorcerer in your stable of gladiators is something any stable owner will trumpet with huge banners and illus-

trated egg tempera placards across the city where the bout is to take place. Spellslingers are celebrated in song and tavern graffiti, and spectators often toss bags of coins into the arena when a favorite spell caster is displayed.

Spellcasters are popular, but to slave owners, can be a dangerous investment. Wizards are preferred to sorcerers by most owners. Wizards are only allowed to review their spellbooks, claim their component pouch and prepare their spells in the moments leading up to a bout. With the dull roar of a waiting crowd over head, wizards prepare their spells in lantern-lit cloisters under the arena floor. Sorcerers are more difficult to separate from their magic because their spells are inborn and need no books or collection of trinkets. Without expensive anti-magical countermeasures, sorcerer gladiators have a nasty reputation for leading effective and terrifying slave revolts.

Canny owners use both mundane and magical means to prevent magical slave insurrections. Magical countermeasure are described with the new equipment, but basic precautions are well known by all stablemasters. Spellcasters are allowed to sleep or rest only in four or five hour intervals, and than awakened to exercise or spar for an hour or two until the day immediately prior to a match. Doing so prevents the spellcaster from effectively regaining spell slots. Especially stubborn spellcasters might find themselves cruelly gagged or have their hands bound with cold iron mittens constantly; those wearing handbinders are often assigned a low ranking slave to feed, clothe and clean them and perform other tasks they are unable to do while bound.

Spellcasters rarely enter the arena alone, as matched against a single warrior, there are only two predictable options. Either the spellcaster's first enchantment fells the opponent, or the warrior closes the distance and slaughters the caster before she can utter a second. Neither result satisfies the crowd. Instead, a spellcaster is usually guarded by a powerful warrior, and the pair is matched against another spellcaster and his guard, a pair of skilled warriors, or a mob of barely trained gladiators or noxii. In the last case, the spellcaster is expected to slaughter the mob to the last man with his or her flashiest, most spectacular combat magic.

BARDS

Bards aren't much sought after as gladiators, but are in great demand as performers. A stable that owns a few talented bard slaves can count on their matches always being well attended, and their gladiator's fame spreading far and wide. Bards rarely fight, but they are in the arena for every match. They sing, dance, caper and cast wildly

imaginative illusions in the background. After a match is over, bards use their arcane talents to craft illusory caricatures of the battle, or bring an illusory replay of the games to a nearby tavern.

If a bard ever enters the arena to fight it's by his own choice, even if the bard is a slave. Too valuable to waste in a real battle, bards usually fight in farcical duels against clowns, mimes and other bards. Occasionally, bards compete against other in a more serious competition, which depends on their skill with songs, rhyme and illusions. If a bard ever tastes blood in the arena, it is almost always a noxio's, as even the most bloodthirsty and battle-hardened bard would never be matched against a real fighter.

Even slave bards are well treated and have more freedom than other gladiators. Many are allowed to leave the ludi on a regular basis, and have almost the status of free men, so long as they're present and (mostly) sober when the opening ceremonies begin.

Clerics

Clerics rarely fight in the arena themselves. Their healing and resurrection talents are too valuable to the stable. Having a skilled cleric in the stable can mean the difference between a critically wounded fighter pulling through with only a few new scars, and a dead gladiator or worse...a permanently benched cripple. Slave clerics are expected to pray for a full complement of healing magic, as well as physical enhancement spells. Many games allow clerics to bless the fighters of their stable just before the match begins- such divine displays draw roars of approval from crowds. Clerics of foreign deities and demon-worshippers cast their bull's strength spells to a chorus of boos and vulgarities.

Their owners allow clerics into the arena during the games' inaugural performances and mythological theater, where their knowledge of various faiths allows them to add passion and authenticity to the drama. Most clerics, regardless of their ethics, are tasked with administering a death-blow to fallen gladiators both to put an end to suffering, and to make sure no slave is feigning death as part of an escape plan. Evil and more dispassionate neutral clerics are often tasked with executing noxii, and enter the arena for one sided slaughters disguised as combat.

Regardless of their faith, slave clerics are usually allowed to keep their holy symbol. Masters realize that even if a cleric's symbol is confiscated, most will just carve another one like a shiv, or cut or tattoo a crude symbol onto their bodies. Clerics are rarely subjected to sleep deprivation like arcane casters, because injuries can happen any time in a ludi, and clergy are to be ready to heal at a moment's

notice. Clerics are controlled by threats, not against them, but against friends and believers in their stable.

DRUIDS

Until they master their shapeshifting talents, neophyte druids are trained and exploited identically to sorcerers. Their nature-based and visually unforgettable powers, foreign appearance and fierce demeanor make druid gladiators of any level. Excellent gladiators High-level druids are some of the most famous of all gladiators- their ability to shapeshift into a fierce wolf, an armored bear or even an obscenity from some elemental hell, makes for bouts which are remembered for an entire lifetime. Fans come from miles around to see a favorite druid fight.

Some of the most famous druids, though are not even known as such.... aren't even believed sentient at all. Druids can earn prestige and even their freedom by fighting exclusively in animal form, eventually leaving the arena as anonymous as they entered it. Some of the most famous animals in the arena have been secret druids- these massive bears, tigers, elephants fight with the power and savagery of their animal seeming but with the cunning and strategy of a man. Unlike true animals, secret druids are no real danger to their 'handlers', and are clever enough to prolong a battle. Neutral evil druids might accept a position as a legendary execution-beast, building a fearful and sadistic reputation in their animal form.

RACES OF THE ARENA

The gladiators of historic Rome make a good model for human arenas, but each race has its own unique role to play in the games. Since most campaigns are a mélange of various real world cultures, adding Roman flavor to any given world isn't difficult. Since humans are the dominant race in most campaigns, they usually have the greatest gladiator tradition, and demi-human gladiators are exciting foreign fighters. Gladiatorial arenas and the slave trade in general are most common in lawful evil and lawful neutral societies, though an ostensibly lawful good nation might find ways to justify its arena: a chance for captured enemies to die valiantly, a way to punish criminals and enforce the state's judgment, ect.

Chaotic evil and neutral societies might have their own arenas, with games that tend to be both simpler and bloodier. Gnoll and orc 'arenas' are rarely more than muddy pits or crudely etched battle circles that interesting captives are dumped into to kill one another for the clan's amusement. Chaotic good societies tend to be more liberal and democratic. Without a slave-holding tradition the legalistic cruelty of gladiatorial executions doesn't appeal.

DWARVES

Dwarven nations have their own subterranean gladiator arenas. Captured humanoids are sometimes forced to fight one another or skilled dwarven champions. Though mostly lawful and good, Dwarven nations have a dangerously strong martial tradition. Being captured alive is considered proof of cowardice and is one of the most disgraceful things that can occur on the battlefield. Dwarves turn captured soldiers into gladiators as a way of letting these 'cowards' die on their feet.

Unlike human arenas, Dwarven gladiatorial stadiums are eerily silent during games. The Dwarves watch in silence, intensely stroking their beards in mute judgment. A communal throat clearing or muted clapping for a valiant fighter are the greatest displays the normally gregarious dwarves will make during a bout. Dwarves see the arena as serious business, as somber as a funeral.

Dwarves fighting in human lands usually fight as murmillio. Dwarves will rarely accept freedom if any other dwarves of their stable remain in bondage. If one is a slave, all are slaves, say Dwarven fighters.

ELVES & HALFEVES

The Elven kingdoms do not enjoy blood sports, and have no great arenas of their own. Captured Elves forced into gladiatorial bouts are expected to resist- even to the point of martyrdom- rather than kill another slave. The ideal of dying rather than committing murder is just that.... an ideal. Elves who actually fought as gladiators are shunned upon their return to their homeland, their infama having returned with them. No elf who has ever been a gladiator may ever hold political office or military command, and clergy are defrocked, though whether the former priests retain their powers or not is a matter between the Elf and his or her deity.

Elves taken as arena-slaves are usually pressed into stereotypically "Elven" roles. Most become beastarii, and those who fight other humanoids are usually hoplomachus, laquearii, or sagittarius. Elves are almost never given heavy armor, even those rare elves used to fighting in such a style.

The Drow are an exception to the Elven distaste for blood-sports. Their subterranean cities are often built around grand arena, and Drow nobles sponsor public games two or three times as large as the most celebrated human games. Many Drow wars are waged for the purpose of capturing gladiators for the arena. Drow games are especially cruel, and their torturers and vile priestesses warm the crowds up with the prolonged execution of captured surface elves, the

vivisection of Driders and the murder by impalement of low caste Drow of both genders.

Humans are relatively rare in Drow arenas, simply because they are not numerous in the Drow's subterranean world. Most gladiators fighting for Drow crowds are demihumans: Dwarves and Derro are common, as are some deep delving gnomes, grimlock barbarians and captured shaugin. Any enemy of the Drow is apt to end up fighting for its life in the arena.

Captured Drow gladiators are top draws. They too usually fight in traditional 'elven' roles, but Drow gladiators only battle at night. This allows the night-adapted Elves to perform at their best, and highlights their novelty value to human attendees.

GNOMES & HALFLINGS

Gnome gladiators are a rarity. Occasionally a gnome clan will construct a fighting circle of its own, in imitation of a human arena, but native bouts usually end at first blood. Gnomes practice debt slavery, but such slave contracts are never permanent, never extend to the slave's descendants and are always finite in duration. Debt slaves are never forced into the arena, though a gnome who's good with his fists might enter a fighting circle for the purse.

Gnome slaves rarely become true gladiators; humans are chauvinistic about size, and relegate the small folk (gnomes and Halflings) to comedic roles in the games. Gnome bards often perform at gladiatorial bouts, or serve as clowns and fools, but rarely pick up the sword themselves. A human stable owner displaying gnome fighters is widely considered to have either gone insane, or found some truly unique attraction to be displayed. Either way, human audiences turn out to see gnomes battle.... but usually only once unless the match is particularly interesting.

On the rare instances gnomes fight, they do so lightly armored. Often they are forced to battle naked or nearly so, and are matched against a lumbering brute in heavy armor.

Halflings are more common than gnomes in the arena, but not by much. Halfling settlements have a dueling tradition of their own with bets flying fast and free at such a duel. Two halflings, their hands bound, fight with knives until one bleeds out. Halfling 'arenas' are little more than a clear space on a tavern's floor or a circle of matted grass.

Halflings are too small to command much respect from human crowds, but a few of the toughest have carved out a niche for themselves as respected dimachaerus or thraex.

HALF ORCS

Half Orcs are more common around a coliseum than cockroaches. Orcs are great gladiators- strong and courageous, showy and dumb, and not picky about who they kill or why as long as they're kept fed and given plenty of women to amuse them. Their bastard sons are equally at home on the killing sands. Half Orcs can fill any arena role, though full blooded orcs are usually lightly armored but outfitted with fanciful and imposing weapons like huge scythes or falchions.

Half Orcs serve as beastarii as often as they act as man-killers. Human audiences love seeing the tusked goliaths matched against dire boars and other piglike monstrosities. It's a racist spectacle that never fails to titillate the mob. Weak and cowardly half orcs are forced into the arena as noxii, and are killed en masse by their larger and more vicious siblings.

THE NEPHILIM - LARGE HUMANOID (LAWFUL)

One of the first great human victories was the conquest of the Nephilim, the 'giants of old', a race of man-like creatures whose empire once spanned half the world. The earliest human legends tell of the centuries of warfare that eventually wore down the mighty Nephilim, and broke the back of their empire. Today, the once mighty Nephilim are reduced to a nation of slaves, living at the sufferance of humanity. The legendary Nephilim cities lie in ruins, and the race's culture has passed away like so much dust. Only the Nephilim's ancient and severe religion sustains the giants, at the same time this strange faith isolates the giants from the dominant human society.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

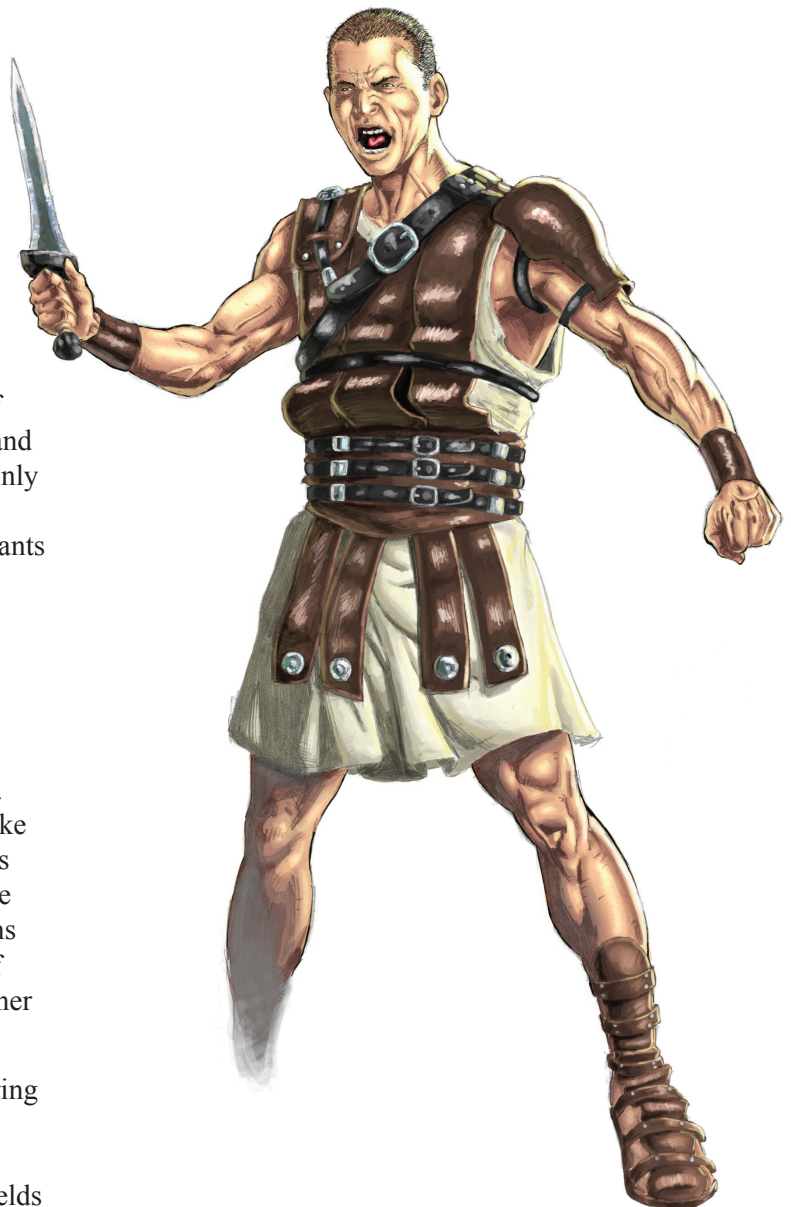
Nephilim stand a head or two taller than even a big man, and have lean bodies corded with ropy muscle. A Nephilim's skin is the grey of unquarried stone, the brown of fertile mud, or the pale blue of a morning sky. The giants have coarse and heavy but ultimately man-like features. Nephilim decorate their faces and upper bodies with intricate tattoos, which include runes in their native tongue, stylized images from their myths and pictograms detailing the great deeds of their ancestors. Nephilim of both genders keep their hair cropped close, and during her pregnancy female Nephilim shave their heads entirely.

Nephilim arms and armor were imitated by the conquering humans. The arms and light armor issued to secutor are scaled-down versions of traditional Nephilim weapons. Most human legionnaires don't realize that the oval shields

and leather skirts that protect them were first invented by Nephilim armorers centuries ago.

PERSONALITY

Nephilim are stoic and somber around humans, speaking little and never initiating a conversation. Though circumstances and ancient treaties force the Nephilim to serve their human subjugators, no force in the multiverse can quell the hate that rages within the average Nephilim's heart. Nephilim hide their contempt for humanity just enough to get by, not one iota more. The giants are similarly reserved amongst other races that trade with humans, viewing Elves, Dwarves and the small folk as being complicit in their bondage. Nephilim are only slightly warmer around Half Orcs, though the proud giants despise Orcs and other barbarous races.



The Nephilim's behavior is based upon their strict religious tradition. The giants never discuss their faith with outsiders, and have no desire to win converts. They follow The Way, the one true path to godhood, and thus are superior to all other faiths and cultures. Nephilim believe there is a fundamental segregation between themselves and other species, which can never be bridged.

Among their own kind, Nephilim can be surprisingly warm and friendly. They occasionally smile, laugh and even tell a rare joke, but are still bound by the strictures of The Way. Many of the leisure activities of the other races- drinking, flirtation, gambling- are forbidden to Nephilim, and the giants look down on companions who indulge.

ALIGNMENT

Nephilim are an inherently lawful race, and their culture is defined by its notions of honor and propriety. Most military historians believe the Nephilim lost the war with humanity because they could not adapt to humanity's unconventional and occasionally chaotic tactics. Nephilim who display blatantly chaotic behavior become pariahs, and those who publically renounce The Way may be put to death by any Nephilim of higher station.

RELATIONS

The Nephilim are a servant race. When their ancient war with humanity came to an end, these giants were forced to beg for peace. The victorious human empire took the entire race into bondage, and today only isolated Nephilim families can call themselves free. Most of these giants serve in the military, where their strength and battle prowess is prized. The old treaties promise any Nephilim who serves honorably for three decades his freedom and the freedom of his mate and female children. Nephilim are fixtures of human arenas, as the curse laid on their race forces them to fight and die for the mob to win the right to bear children.

Other Nephilim, those with less aptitude for violence, girl children, the old and those crippled by injuries, serve as agricultural slaves. Farm slaves don't risk death at sword point, but have no option for gaining their freedom. Farm slaves and house slaves are the lowest rung of Nephilim society. Their battle hardened siblings look down on these 'pampered cowards' and warrior Nephilim are legally allowed to execute plantation Nephilim for any perceived insult, so long as they pay fair restitution to the slave's owner. Many of the wealthiest Nephilim own slaves of their own, and these low caste Nephilim serve as valets, maids and wetnurses.

LANDS

Nephilim-built structures are instantly recognizable. These mud-brick structures have domed roofs painted in brilliant primary colors, and are built for the convenience of creatures a head and a half taller than even the biggest man. Nephilim ghettos can be found in any prosperous human city. Nephilim ghettos are typically found in the worst part of human cities, but are surprisingly clean and safe despite their poverty. The giants establish well-disciplined watches and all citizens of the ghettos are expected to donate their sweat on its repair and upkeep. The giants have a handful of independent settlements, usually built in the ruins of one of their ancient cities or temples. These free cities are small but equally well kept.

REPRODUCTION

The Nephilim lost their war due to a horrific curse placed upon them by human witches. In order to father a child, a Nephilim must kill a living creature in an arena, before an audience of humans. Female Nephilim must do the same in order to conceive, and must enter the arena and kill again within three months of giving birth or the child will die in its crib.

To perpetuate their species, Nephilim are forced to become acutoratii. Even tame farm slaves must kill a dog or chicken in a cobbled together 'arena' in front of their human masters before they attempt to conceive a child. To date, no Nephilim has discovered a way to break this curse, which keeps the race in bondage to humanity.

Despite their (conditional) infertility, Nephilim can have sex for pleasure, though their religion forbids premarital sex and infidelity. When Nephilim pregnancies occur, they last about 8 months and end in the birth of a single child. Nephilim have no interest in mates outside their own race, though as slaves many lack the right to make this choice.

LANGUAGES

Nephilim speak their own poetic and highly allegorical language and Common. Those with a gift for language often learn the language of other slave races, and the languages of the merchants that do business most often with their human masters. Nephilim may select Orc, Gnoll, Goblin, Undercommon and Dwarven as bonus languages.

NAMES

Nephilim have been forced to take human names. However, they retain their singular traditional names, which they use exclusively for religious rites. Nephilim true names are a great secret, and they will never reveal or acknowledge their true names around any human, even a trusted ally. Nephilim true names are descriptive terms,

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often referencing either warfare or agriculture, presented to a Nephilim child when he or she reaches 13. Prior to that they are referred to as simply 'boy' or 'girl' or by a family nickname.

Example true names translated into Common: Goliath's Hammer, Barley Gatherer, Herder of Many, Blacksmith's Bellows, Courageous Spear, Sun's Plowman, Basket of Sheaves

ADVENTURERS

Nephilim adventurers may be runaway slaves, mutinous soldiers fleeing the human legions, or freed Nephilim seeking their fortune. Nephilim explore the ruins of their fallen empire in search of lost secrets of their culture, or in hopes of finding a way to undo the curse upon their race. Their adventurers often seek to recover Nephilim artifacts, whether by legal or illegal means.

NEPHILIM RACIAL TRAITS

Size and Type: Nephilim are Large humanoids, and suffer a -1 size penalty to Armor Class, and a -4 size penalty to Hide checks but receive a +1 size bonus to their Combat Maneuver Bonus and Combat Maneuver Defense. A Nephilim's base land speed is 30 ft.

Nephilim have the lawful subtype. Even if their alignment changes, they still retain this subtype. Any effect that depends on alignment affects a Nephilim as if they have a lawful alignment, no matter what their alignment actually is. Nephilim also suffer effects according to its actual alignment. A Nephilim overcomes Damage Reduction as if its natural weapons and any melee weapons it wields are lawful-aligned.

Enhanced Senses: Nephilim possess Darkvision with a 60 ft range.

Ability Score Modifiers: +2 DEX, +2 CON, -2 INT. Nephilim are a primal form of man- they are amazing athletes and tireless laborers, but they lack the wit and imagination of their human conquerors.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency (EX): Their heritage as arena slaves has forced the Nephilim to master a wide array of diverse weapons. At character creation, the Nephilim gains proficiency in any one exotic weapon of choice.

Oral History (EX): Nephilim traditions are passed down orally, and the giants have prodigious memories. Nephilim receive a +2 racial bonus on Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (religion) checks.

Iron Faith (SU): Nephilim believe that all gods other than the God of Ways are demons, and their fanatical belief

gives them the strength to resist divine magic. Nephilim receive a +1 racial bonus on all saving throws against divine magic cast by believers of other faiths.

Unfortunately, the Nephilim's beliefs prevent beneficial divine magic from being as effective to them. Nephilim healed by foreign divine magic recover only ½ the hit points that they ordinarily would regain.

THE GOD OF WAYS

Intermediate God, Lawful Neutral

Primary Worshipers: exclusively Nephilim

Portfolio: the Nephilim race, honorable behavior, laws, marriage and community, warfare

Domains: Community, Law, Rune, Strength, War

Favored Weapon: gladius (short sword)

The Nephilim do not name or depict the God of Ways in artwork. They believe their unnamed creator is the only true god, and that all other deities are at best servants, and at worse demons attempting to usurp the authority of the God of Ways.

The God of Ways has relatively few clerics. Most of his devotees are druid of a sort, who worship the God of Ways in the few remaining stone circles of the Nephilim-era. His druids most commonly take the form of great rams during battle. Most of the faith's stories and traditions are passed orally, and Nephilim leaders are expected to memorize their faiths' entire history verbatim. A Nephilim leader who cannot recite the holy words is unfit to command.

The few Nephilim clerics use a ram's horn or a scourge made from a ram's tail as a holy symbol. Clerics are given moderate respect for their healing ability, but are second best to druids, who serve as healers, oracles, war leaders and foresters. Apprentice druids are often ordained as clerics before completing their druidic training. Farm slaves, with their closer exposure to human culture, have more clerics than druids, another reason they are disdained by other Nephilim.

MERITUS, GOD OF THE GAMES

Intermediate God, Lawful Neutral

Primary Worshipers: gladiators, especially human gladiators, some soldiers, gamblers

Portfolio: gladiatorial combat, matters of honor, proper behavior of slaves, death in battle

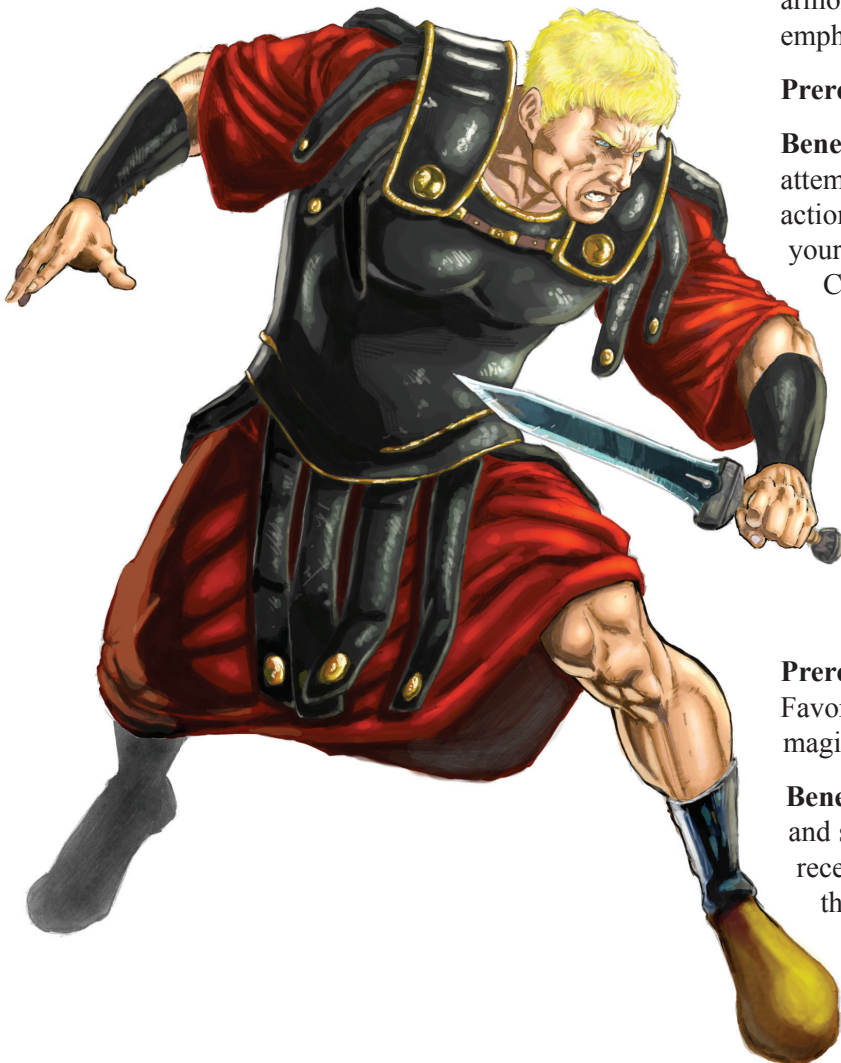
Domains: Death, Luck, Strength, War

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Favored Weapon: gladius (short sword)

Shrines to Meritus can be found at the entrance arch of every major coliseum. Gladiators touch his icon with fingers trembling and poisoned by adrenaline before battles, and wipe the blood of themselves and their adversaries upon the idol afterward... if they are still able. Even followers of other deities will make small offerings to Meritus in hopes of surviving a bout, and gladiators in human lands are expected to sacrifice a ram or calf to Meritus upon winning their freedom. Meritus teaches his followers to fight honorably and to face death boldly, for a fallen gladiator will always reach heaven.

Meritus' priests can be found in any sporting arena where they sell prayers. For a few silver, a fan can hear one of the acolytes rumble a prayer to the God of the Games on behalf of their favorite champion. With no real doctrine to speak of, his priests concern themselves with profit more than the salvation of humanoid souls. Meritus' priesthood also own gambling houses, and sell relics from the game.



They are major participants in the slave trade, but are more honest than most slavers in their dealings and slightly kinder to their captives.

Meritus' symbol is an unpainted marble miniature of a nude male with a neatly trimmed beard, a gladius thrust upward and an editor's rod clenched in the other hand. These statues are usually stained pink with generations of died blood. Travelling priests carry a crude stone copy of this familiar idol, roughly the size of a man's forefinger, as their holy symbol.

CHARACTER OPTIONS FOR A GLADIATOR CAMPAIGN

Any campaign including gladiators in a major role will probably also include the following new feats, spells and magic items.

NEW FEATS

ACROBATIC GLADIATOR (COMBAT)

You fight as a *hoplomachus*, *thraex*, or other lightly armored class of gladiator. Your dancelike combat style emphasizes evasion and thrills the crowd.

Prerequisites: Fleet, Dodge, Perform (dance) 1 rank

Benefit: When unarmored or lightly armored you may attempt a DC 20 Perform (dance) check as a full round action. If this check is successful, this ritual dance focuses your mind, granting you a +1 insight bonus to your Armor Class.

The insight bonus increases by an additional +1 for every five points you beat the Perform check by to a maximum +5 insight bonus to AC. This bonus remains in effect until the end of the encounter.

BEASTARII (COMBAT)

You slaughter beasts both familiar and exotic in the arena, and are skilled at killing fantastic beasts of all variety.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (nature) 1 rank, Survival 1 rank, Favored Enemy class feature (either vermin, animals, magical beasts or aberrations)

Benefit: You are more resistant than normal to the poisons and supernatural abilities of animal-like monsters. You receive a +3 bonus on all saving throws made against the special attack forms (including Extraordinary, Supernatural and Spell-like abilities) of creatures with the Aberration, Animal, Magical Beast and Vermin types, so long as the creatures have Intelligence scores of 4 or less.

CAPRICIOUS FATE (GENERAL)

Meritus enjoys watching his hordes of unclaimed sons and daughters battle for their lives. Valor pleases Meritus, and he will often aid His many children, but at a cost. Fate seems to be especially fickle around the Children of Meritus.

Prerequisites: Child of Meritus

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to one plus your CHA modifier (minimum twice daily) you may choose to reroll any failed attack roll. Doing so is considered part of the initial attack action, and you must accept the results of the second roll, even it is worse then the first.

Meritus extracts a steep price for such divine aid. For one minute after invoking this feat, you automatically fail any saving throw you are called upon to make. Your Child of Meritus feat cannot be used to mitigate these divinely mandated failures.

CHILD OF MERITUS (GENERAL)

Mertius is one of the most prolific of all the gods, fighting in arenas and fathering children so often that even His priests no longer consider such an appearance remarkable. Meritus is a sexually voracious god, begetting sons and daughters on attractive women come to attend the games and the most capable and beautiful gladiatrix. Occasionally the lustful god possesses some lucky gladiator and fathers children through him, but more often Meritus takes what he considers his divine due through incarnation.

Prerequisites: character level first, STR 13+, CHA 13+

Benefit: Your divine heritage makes you more than mortal. You do not suffer ability score loss as you age and have no maximum age. Your type becomes Native Outsider, and you become immune to effects that specifically target humanoids, such as charm person. As a native outsider, you have a deep connection to this plane, and may be raised or resurrected as easily as any mortal creature.

The Children of Meritus are known for their luck and arena prowess. Once per day, you may reroll any single failed saving throw when fighting before an audience. You must accept the results of the second roll, even if it is worse than the first. This ability cannot be used when out of the spotlight.

DEFENSIVE STYLE (COMBAT)

You prefer to let your opponent take the first swings, and tire them out. Only after they've flailed ineffectually at you for a few stings to you choose to act.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes

Benefit: You may voluntarily lower your order in the Initiative count by any multiple of 4. For each -4 penalty you apply to Initiative, you receive a +1 competence bonus to Armor Class. The bonus and penalty remain in effect for the duration of the encounter.

DIPLOMACY OF STRENGTH (GENERAL)

You can use your intimidating physical prowess and physical perfection to your advantage in delicate negotiations.

Prerequisites: Intimidating Prowess, Diplomacy 1 rank

Benefit: You add your STR modifier as a bonus to Diplomacy and Perform checks in addition to your CHA modifier.

FOOTWORK (COMBAT)

Your fighting style emphasizes mobility and nimble footwork that would put a boxer or ballerina to shame.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Nimble Moves, Perform (dance) 1 rank

Benefit: You may take an additional 5 ft step each round. You may combine your two available 5 ft steps into a single 10 ft step or make two 5 ft steps at separate times during the round.

GLADIATOR'S BASTARD (GENERAL)

Gladiators are attractive sexual prospect, and more than one well-off woman with an impotent husband secretly used a particularly famous gladiator to father an heir. Very few gladiators go to their death sexually unfulfilled.

Prerequisite: character level first

Benefit: You are the child of a gladiator, a secret which is widely whispered but can never be proven. The stain of your father's occupation clings to you, but the strength of his arms has passed to you. You are crass and occasionally boorish, an embarrassment to high society, but a fit athlete and terrifying fighter.

Any time you roll a natural 1 on any CHA-based skill check, you receive a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls and STR-based skill checks. This bonus lasts for two hours after the failed CHA-based check. If you roll a natural 1 on additional CHA-based skill checks while the first bonus is active, the bonus is cumulative to a maximum +5 morale bonus on STR-based skill checks and attack rolls.

HAMMER THROUGH DEFENSES (COMBAT)

Your mighty blows can crush even the densest and most comprehensive defenses. Eventually, you can wear down even giants and dragons.

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Prerequisites: Power Attack, Vital Strike, base attack bonus +9

Benefit: Each time you hit an adversary with any kind of Damage Reduction and deal at least one point of damage, you reduce that opponent's Damage Reduction by one point. This reduction remains until the end of the encounter.

INTIMIDATING DISPLAY (COMBAT)

Like all gladiators, you are a showman, and begin your matches with an impressive display of your strength, prowess and ferocity. You roar, you scream, you brandish your weapon and threaten damnation and death waits anyone stupid enough to raise a blade against you!

Prerequisites: Intimidating Prowess, Perform (oratory, bloodsports, dance or similar) 4 ranks, base attack bonus +6

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to three plus your CHA modifier (minimum 3x daily), you may make an intimidating display as a full round action. Make a DC 20 Perform check; if you succeed at the check, you receive a luck bonus on melee attack and damage rolls equal to your margin of success. This bonus applies to all attacks you make on the next round, including any attacks of opportunity you make.

MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (GENERAL)

Your word is law. With a gesture and a somber word, you may grant a fallen warrior the black mercy of an honorable death or spare him to fight another day.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (religion) 5 ranks, Iron Will, any lawful alignment

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to 3 + your CHA modifier (minimum 3x daily), you may speak a mystical word of judgment upon any wounded creature with 4 or fewer Hit Points remaining. The target creature must be within 100 ft of you and clearly able to see and hear you. Depending on the inflection you choose, this word (which has roots in Celestial and is linguistically similar to the fearsome Power Words) your word of judgment has one of two effects.

- **Life:** Your target is automatically stabilized and recovers a number of Hit Points equal to your CHA modifier. If unconscious, your target awakens.
- **Death:** If your target fails a FORT Save (DC 12 + your CHA modifier) it dies. Targets killed in this manner are considered to have been slain by a death effect.

Special: Must have acted as editor in a gladiatorial game and passed sentence on at least one defeated gladiator

PROTECTIVE BULK (COMBAT)

Your high fat, mostly vegetarian diet has wrapped you in a layer of fat which helps protect in the arena.

Prerequisite: Toughness, STR 13+

Benefit: Your layer of fat provides you with Damage Resistance 3/- against slashing weapons. When facing slashing damage, this DR stacks with Damage Resistance from other sources such as Barbarian levels.

ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES (COMBAT)

You know how to twist your body at the last second to avoid a lethal wound.

Prerequisites: Lightning Reflexes, DEX 15+, Perform (dance or bloodsports) 8 ranks

Benefit: Anytime you suffer a confirmed critical hit, you may attempt a DC 22 Perform (dance or bloodsports) check. If this check succeeds, you treat the critical hit as a normal blow instead. You may use this feat only when unarmored or lightly armored.

SACRED BEAST (NEPHILIM, GENERAL)

The druids of The Way revere the strong and tenacious ram as a holy beast, the animal that is most like the God of the Way. Nephilim druids favor the ram over all other forms, and in their animal state, they are massive beasts. In ram-form their hides are sheathed in a smooth granite carapace, and their spiraling horns are sharper than vorpal daggers.

Prerequisites: Nephilim race, must have chosen druid as favored class, ability to wildshape into a Large animal, Knowledge (religion) 6 ranks

Benefit: When wildshaped into a ram, you are an exceptionally mighty example of the species. Your ram form receives a +4 racial bonus to its STR and CON scores and a +2 racial bonus to its DEX score. While in ram form, you receive an additional +2 natural armor bonus.

SLAYER OF MULTITUDES (COMBAT)

You are a tireless warrior, and each enemy you lay low gives his last pained breath to you. According to the legends that have sprung up around you, you can fight for days, and slay whole regiments.

Prerequisites: Iron Will, base attack bonus +11

Benefit: Each time you personally reduce an enemy whose Challenge Rating is no lower than your total character level

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-1, you regain a hit point. This healing effect cannot raise your hit points above your normal maximum total.

Special: You have a very faint necromantic aura.

VERBATIM WIZARDRY (NEPHILIM, GENERAL)

Nephilim have a strong oral tradition, and most Nephilim leaders can recite their holy texts verbatim. Their wizards have an equally incorruptible oral tradition. Nephilim spellbooks are rare, as masters teach their apprentices that a poor memory for spells is a sign of corruption by false idols.

Prerequisites: Nephilim race, INT 13+, ability to prepare arcane spells

Benefit: The Nephilim spellcaster does not need to consult a spellbook to prepare spells; he or she has memorized the entire contents of such a tome, and will never and can never lose their spell knowledge. Preparing and 'scribing' found spells to the Nephilim's mental spellbook functions identically to preparing or copying spells to an ordinary spellbook. The time required to copy spells represents hours upon hours of rote memorization and the GP cost associated with coping spells to a book becomes a sacrifice to the God of Ways.

WARRIOR'S FOCUS (COMBAT)

Your intense martial training gives you the ability to enter a state of heightened awareness and readiness. While in this heightened state, you can expend your mental focus to fight like a legend.

Prerequisites: Iron Will, Bravery +3 (fighter class feature)

Benefit: Establishing a warrior's focus requires at least five minutes of concentration, during which the warrior slowly practices weapon stances and attunes themselves to their weapons and surroundings. Once the fighter has entered the focused state, he or she remains so until he sleeps (or enters a meditative trance state, as in the case of Elven warriors), or is knocked unconscious.

At any point while you are in the focused state, you can expend this mental focus to activate one of the unique abilities described below. Once your warrior's focus is expended, you must meditate again to regain your martial focus. Expendng your focus is a free action, and is often considered part of another action.

- **Feats of Strength:** When performing any STR check or STR-based skill check, you may expend your focus to gain a +2d4 morale bonus on the check. Your will can push your body past all previous limits.

- **Improved Tactics:** You gain the ability to mimic a Combat feat you do not possess. By expending your focus on this ability, you may act as if you possessed any single feat on the Combat Feat list for one minute. You must meet all the prerequisites of this improvised feat.
- **Lethally Accurate:** While making a melee or unarmed attack, you may expend your focus to receive a +5 bonus on the attack roll. You must declare that you are using this ability prior to making the attack roll.
- **Second Wind:** By expending your focus, you instantly recover a number of Hit Points equal to 1d4 + your STR modifier, allowing you to keep fighting against impossible odds.

GLADIATORIAL MAGIC ITEMS

ACTOR'S OIL

Aura: faint transmutation

CL: 4th

Slot: potion/oil

Price: 400 gp

Weight: 1 lb

This perfumed oil is kept in a small amphora decorated with black and crimson images of leaping acrobats and battling gladiators. Rubbed on the body, it makes the skin glisten in the sun.

For 1d4+1 hours after applying Actor's Oil, the wearer becomes more charming and charismatic. Any time the wearer rolls a natural 19 or 20 on any CHA check or CHA-based skill check, he or she adds +5 to the total result of the roll.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Brew Potion, Eagle's Splendor, creator must have 5 ranks in any Perform skill

Cost: 200 gp

BEAUTIFUL BUFFOON'S PAINT

Aura: faint conjuration

CL: 2nd

Slot: potion/oil

Price: 100 gp

Weight: 1 lb

When gnomes enter the arena to fight, they usually do so nude or nearly so. Gnome gladiators fight with an acrobatic and capering style, and paint their entire bodies in colorful patterns. Their painted motley includes bold geometric

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patterns, clashing patches of brilliant color adorning opposite limbs, and heraldry bastardized to the point of parody.

Beautiful Buffon's Paint is a set of colors in miniature alabaster jars. When painted on the body, the wearer gains a pool of defense points equal to their highest ranking Perform skill plus their CHA modifier. The wearer can as a free action, usable even on other character's turns, apply one or more defense points as a luck bonus to their armor class. This luck bonus applies to a single attack roll only, and the use defense points must be declared before the attack roll is made.

The wearer may decide to expend his or her entire store of defense points to protect against a single attack, or may choose to only add one or two defense points to armor class at a time. The wearer must be unarmored or lightly armored for this magic to function. Once applied, the buffon's paint remains usable for up to 12 hours, or until it is either washed away or all the wearer's defense points are expended. A character can only apply Beautiful Buffon's Paint once per 24 hour period.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Brew Potion, mage armor, creator must be a Gnome with at least 5 ranks in any Perform skill

Cost: 50 gp

EDITOR'S ROD

Aura: moderate enchantment

CL: 10th

Slot: weapon

Price: 69,900 gp

Weight: 6 lbs

The Editor's Rod is a symbol of authority over a gladiatorial combat. This 8-10 ft long quarterstaff is made of fine white wood and is decorated with crimson and gold ribbons twined the length of the shaft. One end of the staff ends in a circular eye, upon which a dreamcatcher-type decoration is woven in purple and silver thread.

The Editor's Rod is a +1 quarterstaff which has 10 ft reach due to its exaggerated size. When the wielder presses the oval eye atop the rod to his mouth, his words can be heard clearly by every creature within 300 ft if he speaks in a normal voice. If the wielder shouts, his words carry for more than half a mile, making this perfect to address a rowdy arena crowd.

Three times per day, the wielder may make a touch attack with the Editor's Rod. If the touch attack is successful, the target is held as if by a Hold Monster spell cast by a 10th level bard.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, ventriloquism, hold monster

Cost: 34,950 gp

FREEMAN'S RUDIS

Aura: strong abjuration

CL: 10th

Slot: weapon

Price: 200,000 gp

Weight: 4 lbs

This wooden gladius is a symbol of a gladiator's freedom, and is offered a warrior upon his honorable retirement from the arena. The rudis is a fine wood model of a weapon, and the hilt is adorned with a brass or gold inscription plate honoring the gladiator, the match in which he won his freedom and the name of the editor who freed him.

This masterwork wooden weapon inflicts 1d4+1 points of bludgeoning damage. The rudis is not intended for combat though. If worn or carried (even if sheathed), the Freeman's Rudis helps protect the owner against any effect that would return him to bondage.

Once per day per spell, the Rudis will automatically cast any of the following spells upon its wielder:

- Break Enchantment 1x/day
- Dispel Magic 1x/day
- Freedom of Movement 1x/day
- Remove Curse 1x/day

All spells are cast as if by a 10th level cleric. The spell is cast immediately after the wielder succumbs to the appropriate spell or effect. The wielder cannot choose not to have the Rudis activate and cast its helpful spells if the magic weapon has the ability to do so, as long as the weapon is carried anywhere on his person.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, Break Enchantment, Dispel Magic, Freedom of Movement, Remove Curse, creator must be a free citizen

Cost: 100,000 gp

GAVEL OF SEGREGATION

Aura: moderate necromancy

CL: 6th

Slot: weapon

Price: 44,000 gp

Weight: 6 lbs

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A touch from this long handled iron and steel war hammer sets its victim apart from society. The Gavel of Segregation is a +2 war hammer with a long handle wrapped in black leather; the head of the weapon is decorated with low relief sculptures of noxii being executed in the arena or devoured by wild and fanciful beasts.

Any non-lawful creature struck by the Gavel of Segregation must succeed at a DC 22 WILL Save or become cursed as noxii. Victims failing their save suffer a permanent -4 penalty on CHA-based skill checks and attribute checks against lawful creatures. Additionally, when struck by any melee attack by any lawful ally of the Gavel of Segregation's wielder, the now cursed noxii always suffers maximum damage from the attack.

Non-lawful characters who wield the Gavel of Segregation gain a negative level. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but cannot be restored in any way as long as the weapon is in their possession.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, creator must be lawful

Cost: 22,000 gp

GLADIATOR'S DAGGER

This mundane weapon is virtually unknown outside the arena. The weapon has a dagger's hilt, but where the blade would ordinarily be, this strange weapon has four sharpened tines arranged in an X or cross pattern. The gladiator's dagger is an excellent weapon for dispatching wounded foes, or for snatching a blade out of an unwary opponent's hand.

The wielder of a Gladiator's Dagger receives a +1 circumstance bonus to his or her CMB when attempting to disarm an enemy's weapon thanks to the dagger's design.

Cost: 5 gp

Damage: 1d3 piercing (Small) 1d4 piercing (Medium)

Critical: natural 20/x3

Range: 10 ft

Weight: 1 lb.

GLADIUS OF THE PURSE

Aura: strong conjuration

CL: 9th

Slot: weapon

Price: 72,000 gp

Weight: 2 lbs

This simple and well-used warrior's gladius has had gold and silver coins nailed into its hilt, and liquid gold was poured onto the blade in random web-like patterns and then allowed to harden.

Three times per day, upon a shouted command from the wielder, the +3 short sword begins to glow with a brilliant golden light (bright light in a 10 ft radius, shadowy illumination in a 50 ft radius). For one minute per activation, the Gladius of the Purse produces one newly minted gold piece per point of damage the wielder inflicts during that time. The coins seem to fall from the heavens around the battlefield.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, major creation

Cost: 36,000 gp

NEMEAN GUARD

Aura: stong abjuration & conjuration

CL: 13th

Slot: occupies the armor and gauntlet slots

Price: 222,400 gp

Weight: 20 lbs

This armored sleeve and breastplate protects the weaker, left side of the body. Made of plates of bronze alloyed with copper to give a blood red tinge, the shoulder plate is crowned with a snarling lion's face. The shoulder guard's edge is a serrated lion's mane; when the wearer calls upon the guard's powers both the sculpted lion's eyes and the edges of its mane ignite.

The Nemean Guard acts as a +1 breastplate of light fortification, and has the following additional properties. Once per day, as a standard action, the wearer can summon a celestial lion to fight at his side. This functions as a Summon Monster IV spell cast by a 13th level wizard, and the celestial lion can only be summoned if the wearer has personally slain at least one living creature during the current encounter.

Additionally, once per day the wearer of the Nemean Guard can call upon the fiery energies of the armor to bestow the flaming property upon his melee and natural weapon attacks. Calling upon this ability is a move equivalent action, and the effect remains for 6 rounds after it is activated. The wearer of the Nemean Guard must have suffered at least 10 points of damage during the current encounter in order to activate the Nemean Guard's flames.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Magic Arms & Armor, fireball, limited wish, summon monster IV

Cost: 111, 200 gp

PSYCHOPOMP'S GOLDEN MASK

Aura: faint necromancy

CL: 4th

Slot: goggles

Price: 16,000 gp

Weight: 3 lbs

This theater mask of beaten gold is hammered into the shape of a grinning youth with curly locks and a laurel wreath upon his brow. A gilded tear drips from one of the mask's eye slits. The figure on the mask is a psychopomp—a messenger of death, who bears the souls of the recently deceased to the underworld. Executioners at the games wear these masks as they slice the throats of the apparently slain, to make certain that dead is dead.

While wearing this mask, the DC of the FORT Save made to resist any coup de gras you inflict is increased by +3.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Wondrous Item, death knell

Cost: 8,000 gp

SPELLBINDING MANACLES

Aura: faint transmutation

CL: 4th

Slot : gauntlets

Price: 16,000 gp

Weight: 8 lbs

Each of these bellshaped devices is hinged on the side. When a spellcaster's fisted hand is forced into the bell, and the device is locked shut, he cannot open his fingers. The manacles include a short chain allowing the spellcaster's hands to be chained either in front or behind his body.

Even mundane versions of the cruel manacles impose a 75% spell failure chance on any spell with somatic components. Spellbinding manacles are also enchanted with a permanent silence effect, as cast by a 4th level cleric. Non-enchanted versions of this magic item exist, and sell for about 15 gp.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Wondrous Item, silence

Cost: 8,000 gp

NEW SPELLS

GLADIATOR'S VIRILITY

School transmutation Level bard 0, sorcerer/wizard 0

Casting Time 1 standard action

Component V, S, M (a small vial of blood from a slain gladiator)

Range touch

Duration 1 day

Saving Throw FORT negates (harmless) **Spell Resistance** no

The spilt blood of a gladiator is a cure for impotence and infertility. This spell restores sexual function and the ability to conceive to any humanoid enchanted by it, regardless of age or infirmity. The wealthy and aged attendees of the games have this cantrip cast upon them as often as they can afford.

MERCURIAL VULNERABILITIES

School transmutation Level sorcerer/wizard 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Component V, S

Range personal / special (see text)

Duration 1 minute/level

Saving Throw none **Spell Resistance** no

When you cast this spell, it is a kind of challenge to the souls of your adversaries, and their ingenuity at the killing arts. When this spell is cast, a multicolored aura splashes against you like paint, and than mirrors the contours of your form, sheathing you in a glistening, oily rainbow.

For the duration of the spell you become immune to one energy form of your choice, decided at the moment of casting, which cannot be changed. However, your colorful aura is open to another form of elemental energy, and you take double damage from another type of energy, which is chosen by your opponent as a free action when the spell is cast. You become temporarily vulnerable to the designated energy type, even if you would normally be resistant or immune.

If you are facing multiple opponents within a 100 ft radius, they make opposed CHA checks to see which of them decide your new vulnerability. This choice is subconscious, and even enemies who are unaware of what this spell does or are normally mindless may make it. You may not cast this spell if there is not at least one hostile creature within a 100 ft radius.

POISONED BY ADRENALINE**School** necromancy Level cleric 4, sorcerer/wizard 4**Casting Time** 1 standard action**Component** V, S, M (dried muscle fiber from a slain gladiator)**Range** Close (25 ft + 5 ft /level)**Duration** 1 round/level (D)**Saving Throw** FORT negates **Spell Resistance** Yes

With a gesture, you send dangerous levels of adrenaline rushing through a victim's blood stream. Your victim trembles and froths with barely contained rage and excitement, their heart eventually bursting within their breast.

If your target fails his save, he is overcome with rage. Your target suffers a -2 penalty on attack rolls, but receives a +2 bonus on damage rolls, and cannot use skills or talents requiring concentration. This spell's effects stack with barbarian rage and similar abilities.

While goaded by the spell, your victim suffers 1d4 points of damage each time he personally kills any creature, as adrenaline surges push his body past all safe and sane limits.

WILL OF THE CROWD**School** enchantment Level bard 5, sorcerer/wizard 6**Casting Time** full round action**Component** V, S, M (a ruby or emerald worth at least 50 gp), Focus (a crowd of at least 50-60 characters)**Range** one arena**Duration** instant**Saving Throw** WILL Negates **Spell Resistance** no

Often cast by editors before the games begins, this spell subsumes reflexes and combat training and allows the fickle mob decide the course of a battle. When this spell is cast, a glittering aura fills the entire arena, regardless of size, and motes of strange light touch all gladiators and audience members.

On the arena floor, all combatants make a Perform (bloodsports or similar) check rather than an initiative check to determine the order of combat. Those who successfully make their WILL Save roll initiative normally and are fit into the combat order. If cast while a battle is already in session, those who fail their WILL Saves reroll initiative order using Perform checks, while those who succeed at their WILL Save retain their place in the combat order.

**ADVENTURE SITE:
THE COLISEUM MAXIMUS**

The Coliseum Maximus is the largest and most famous arena in the known world. Built atop a conflux of ley lines, the ground the arena stands upon today was once sacred to the Nephilim God of the Way. The Coliseum Maximus was dedicated twenty years after the conquest of the Nephilim, inaugurated with 100 days of games.

The Coliseum Maximus can seat 40,000 spectators at any given time, and it rises over its host city like an artificial mountain. The structure stands more than six stories tall, and dwarfs the city's next tallest building- a four story temple to the gods of humanity. The arena is built at the center of the city, where a crossroads and druidic circle stood in olden days. To the north and east, the political districts, and to the south and west lie the homes and shops and workhouses of the poor. The city's Nephilim community has built their ghetto in the western shadow of the Coliseum Maximus.

The structure is an oval amphitheater made out of pink-veined marble. During the afternoon, the sun beats down on the pale pink structure and turns it into a blazing beacon, almost too bright to look upon directly. As the sun sets, the Coliseum Maximus seems to absorb the color from the fading sun. At twilight, the massive arena seems to be made of bronze. On game days, garish and vulgar banners and painted doors hung from the upper stories advertise famous fighters and special events.

MUNDANE FEATURES

Before a match, gladiators wait beneath the arena in stifling 10 ft x 10 ft cells, one or two men to a cage. These private cells are built into the arena's many Dwarf-built basement levels. Larger underground chambers serve as mess halls for gladiators and arena militia alike and physicians offices. Small temples to Meritus and other gods popular among the gladiators are tucked into out of the way corner.

Directly beneath the arena floor, a clockwork and pulley elevator system can raise gladiators, beasts and equipment into the arena. Gangs of slaves pull in unison to bring the elevator up into the arena. The elevator floor is large enough to lift an full grown Roc into the floor, and can accommodate up to 20 – 30 gladiators at a time. Stagehands also use the elevators to bring props up from the storehouses beneath the arena floor.

The arena floor is an oval roughly 400 ft by 150 ft at its narrowest point. At the center of the arena a Nephilim

stone circle, from the olden days, has been left untouched. The victorious human empire left these stones- defiled and desanctified- as a symbol of their total victory over the giants. The elevator lift rises from the center of these primeval rune stones. Gladiators often take cover behind these stones during tournaments.

Stagehands can erect more elaborate scenes for the games with a few hours work. Often elaborate artificial forests are constructed on the arena floor, or teams of gladiators may be tasked with defending or besieging clap-built castles at either end of the sand. Aqueducts built into the arena walls can flood the entire arena floor, with the water level rising to within a hand-span of the royal box. It takes most of an afternoon to flood the arena for a watery spectacle. The opening for the elevator is (mostly) waterproofed, but slaves toiling below must endure constant drips, the stench of old mold and rust covering everything.

The first and best row of seats is about 8 ft from the arena floor. The royal box sits at the northern apex of the arena, and is a small piece of gilded heaven. Lesser nobility and government officials sit to the left and right of the royal box, which is flanked by crimson banners and golden statues of the current ruler. When the royal box is filled, a pair of iron golems shaped as murmillio animate to protect them. Otherwise, these twin goliaths wait patiently at the entrance arch leading to the box and take no actions, even if the royal box itself rifled or vandalized: their orders only apply to the protection of the royal family and its guests.

Priests and priestesses sit farther down the first row of seats, with the space directly opposite the royal box dedicated to religious statuary. The remaining rows of seats are segregated by class. Wealthy minor nobles take the second, military heroes the third, a roster of increasingly middle class merchants the next. Slaves and poor free citizens cram into the rafters, the top seats where the sun beats down hottest and the action below is all but hidden by distance.

The Coliseum Maximus shades itself with an ingenious series of cloth awnings. Sailors handle the rope works which retract and extend the arena's cloth roof. Various shades and thicknesses of cloth are used, to create a variety of atmospheres. Cloth awnings dyed in different colors turn the sunlight green, or gold, or royal purple or blood red depending on what occurs on the arena sand. The heaviest hemp awning is thick enough to turn mid-day sun into dim twilight.

TOURNAMENT OF GHOSTS

The Coliseum Maximus is a magical place, even the desecration of its stone circle cannot change that. At the beginning of winter, the barrier between the worlds of the dead and the living stretch thin. Each autumn, the Coliseum Maximus is host to the Tournament of Ghosts. Starting at sunset and continuing to the next dawn, the Coliseum Maximus drifts out of phase with the material plane.

Those in the arena when this event occurs become partially shifted to the Ethereal Plane. The gladiators battle one another, but their swords and spells have no effect on those still firmly on the Material Plane. The gladiators appear ghostly, and their words echo, as if spoken at a great distance. The city's nobles abandon their luxury boxes and wander the arena floor, stepping through a ghostly grand melee and watching the killing up close. Necklaces and brooches of dimensional anchor keep the wealthy spectators safe from the gladiator's ghostly blades, and serve as a status symbol.

The Tournament of Ghosts begins at sunset and ends the following dawn. Nobles are allowed onto the arena floor a few minutes after sunset, while the city's poor watch from the stands. By long standing tradition, the poor are allowed to temporarily lay claim to the vacated noble seating on this night. A few brave souls might even sneak into the royal box- a presumption they are whipped soundly for.

VALOR REWARDED

Less predictably, the Coliseum Maximus' own magic might return a fallen gladiator to life if the fates are kind. The passion of the crowd taps into some vestige of the stone circle's magic and the arena erupts in golden flame that does not burn. A fallen fighter that won the crowd's love receives the benefit of a True Resurrection spell as the golden flames flicker out.

There is no real way to predict who will receive this spontaneous blessing, but bards may attempt to eulogize a slain gladiator with enough fervor to win the crowds' heart. A bard may attempt a DC 42 Perform (oratory or poetry) check to memorialize a slain comrade. If successful, the arena's soul might be stirred, and maybe...just maybe... the dead gladiator will be returned to life.

After a resurrection, the old runes cut into the standing stones glow faintly, like dying embers, for several days.