



# SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

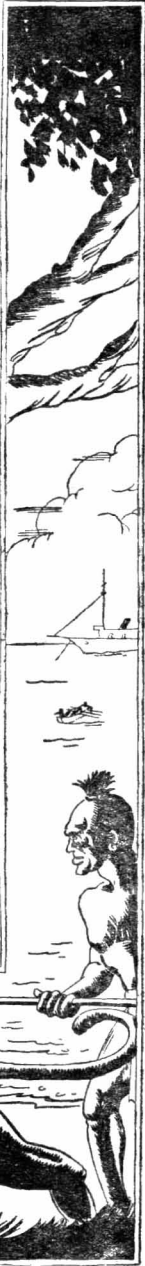
September, 1936

Vol. 4, No. 6

## CONTENTS

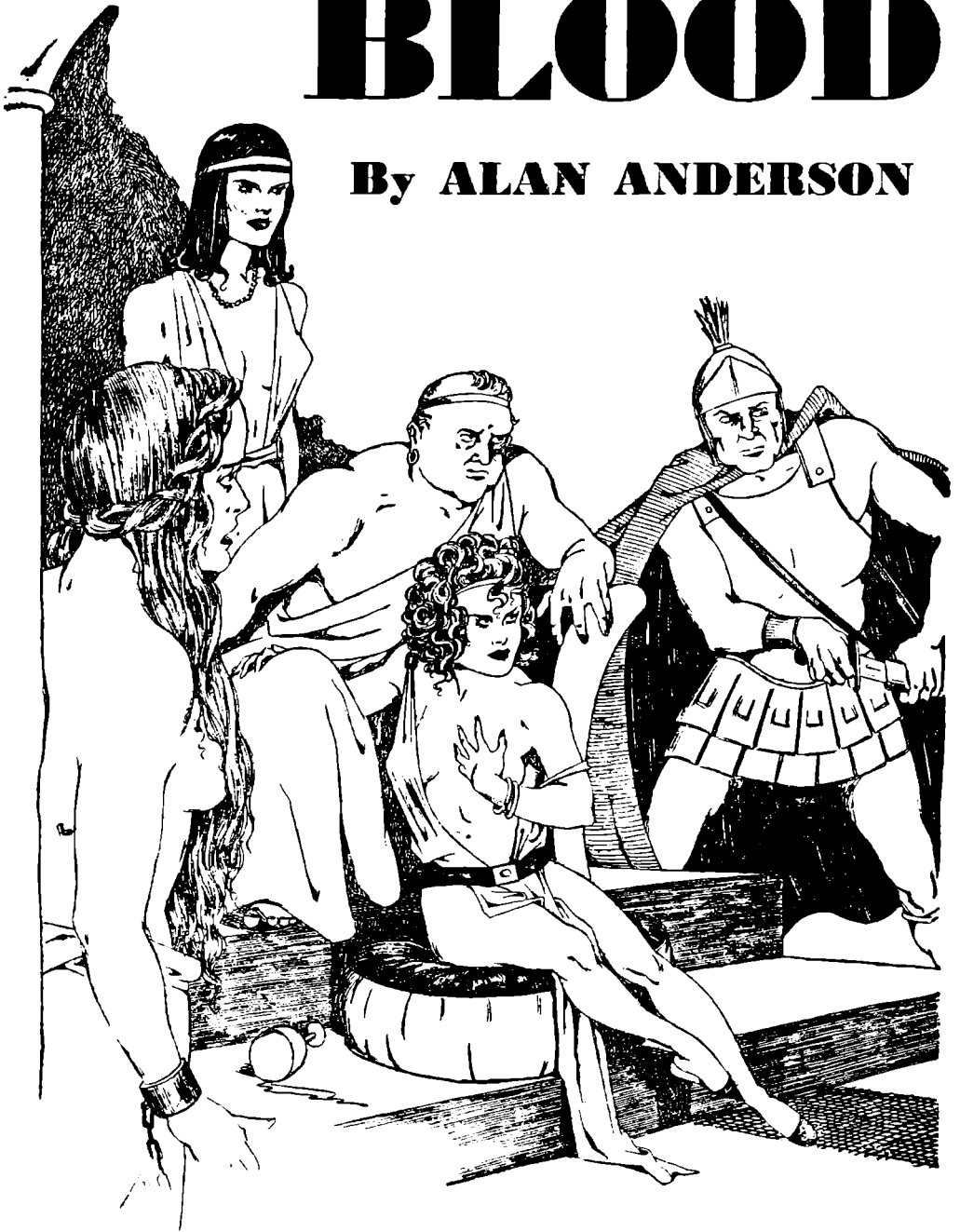
<b>THE DRAGON OF KAO TSU</b> .....	4
Sam Walser	
<b>BLOOD AND FIRE</b> .....	16
Alan Anderson	
<b>PYGMY MAGIC</b> .....	28
Clint Morgan	
<b>DEATH TRAIL</b> .....	40
Clive Trent	
<b>DIANA DAW</b> .....	52
Clayton Maxwell	
<b>CARBOY OF DEATH</b> .....	54
Robert Leslie Bellem	
<b>VALLEY OF BLOOD</b> .....	66
Lew Merrill	
<b>BLOOD HAS STICKY FINGERS</b> .....	78
John Bard	
<b>QUEEN OF THE FLAMING ARROWS</b> ..	86
Frank E. Marks	
<b>POPPY DUST</b> .....	94
Willis Vachel Keith	

SPICY-ADVENTURE STORIES is published by the Culture Publications, Inc., 900 Market St., Wilmington, Del. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.



# BLOOD

By ALAN ANDERSON



**W**HEN the guard had passed, a grimy hand picked up a stick and struck the stone wall three light blows. The reply came dully. There was a crack in the wall. Festered lips pressed there.

"Spartacus! Be ye well?"

"I hunger. I thirst. In time I shall perish," came the weak reply.

"Courage, Spartacus! We, too, hunger."

"Be there news?"

"Nay. Madness hast assuredly seized our master. Thou who art his greatest

# and FIRE

*Julian's whole fortune was due to the skill of Spartacus, his gladiator. And yet it's a female slave who saves Spartacus when his master betrays him!*



The gladiator's chains snapped like rotten cloth. Heedless of the lash, he leaped.

treasure lie rotting in a dungeon."

"And thou?"

"We, too, starve. The Nubian hast

perished from the hundred lashes. Yet our master still buys slaves. Roman armies have conquered."

"Cursed be these Roman dogs!" said Spartacus in a savage voice.

"Today ten female slaves arrive. But caution! Be ready. A few crumbs I will blow through the crack. Food is precious. 'Tis all we can spare."

The man dusted crumbs into the crack and blew. On the other side, Spartacus caught them in his cupped hand. At the roof of the dungeon there was a tiny barred window in the wall. It admitted a faint light. Spartacus carried the crumbs to a hole at the base of the opposite wall. He piled them there.

Then he knelt to one side and picked up a stone. He crouched in statue-like immobility. Time passed. A half an hour. He did not move. An hour went by. His bones ached and his flesh was cold. Still he was motionless.

**T**HEN there was a faint movement at the hole. A tiny, whiskered snout appeared. Spartacus tensed. A gray head appeared. Button black eyes surveyed the place. Assured, a huge rat stuck his head into the dungeon. Then its shoulders. A wet tongue began to lick up the crumbs. The stone fell. The rat perished.

With a knife-sharp stone, Spartacus gutted the beast and skinned it. Then he disjointed it and began to devour the still warm flesh. The meat was tough and bitter. But he wolfed it down. He cracked the skull and sucked out the brains. The eyes, too, he ate. His stomach threatened to revolt. He got up and paced the floor.

"I be a Spartan," he assured himself. "All the might of the Roman Empire canst not bend my will."

Strength swept through his body and his despair lightened. He returned to the remains of the rat, squeezed out the en-

trails and ground his teeth on the elastic tissue.

"Thirty and three days in this stinking dungeon," he muttered to himself. "New slaves, eh? And 'twas my skill that won them. Yet my bloated master Julian hast thrown me into this wretched dungeon. Patience, Spartacus! Suffering makes vengeance the sweeter."

He laughed a trifle madly and hate blazed in his eyes. Then knowing the madness that might result from inactivity, he swept up the remains of the rat and hid them behind a loose stone in the wall. Three knocks echoed dismally throughout the dungeon. He went to the wall.

"Be warned, Spartacus! Many guards cross the yard."

But by the time the guards reached the dungeons, the crack had been filled with mortar. The slaves, herded like cattle, were taken from the building and marched to the basement of the villa where hot baths awaited them.

"Our master Julian hast guests," whispered Joseph, the Judean, to Spartacus. "Again he displays his worldly goods."

The slaves bathed, were given clean loin cloths and, after their hands had been shackled, were escorted to the main room of the villa.

It was a huge room with luxurious couches forming a rectangle within the walls. Between each couch, and set on a waist-high pedestal of stone, were brass braziers filled with burning charcoal. They were about two feet in diameter and gave off a pleasant heat. Spartacus thought of the death chill of his dungeon and smiled. It was not a nice smile.

**R**ECLINING on one of the couches, and with a female slave squatting

on the floor at his head, Julian held a cup of wine in one hand. With the other he ruffled the red curls of the slave, who was viewing the male slaves with contempt. Behind Julian stood a handsome youth attired in the colorful cape of the Empress's own guard. Next to him stood a well-formed, not unhandsome woman some thirty years of age whose face bore the stamp of cruelty.

"These be my fighting slaves, sister," said Julian to the woman with a careless wave at the men before them.

"A well-scarred rabble, but one," said she. "Who be the scarless one? A fledgling?"

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Julian and his great belly rolled. "That man be Spartacus. The greatest gladiator in all the Empire. A hundred and ten men hast he slain."

"His eyes be gray and methinks hate simmers there," said the woman, but added: "Yet he is young and handsome. What be thy price?"

"To Julian, he be priceless," said the youth at her side. "But for Spartacus, Julian would have no riches."

Julian colored.

"Hold thy tongue, cousin Aristius!" he ordered. "Thou hatest me, that I know. But this be my household."

"Aye, Aristius," said the woman, "thou art a fool. Thou who believes in free men and maids."

"Sister," said Julian, "in five days Spartacus fights again. Thou must stay for the games. Four days hence cousin Aristius wilt match his gray Arabs at the chariot races at the Circus Maximus. Mayhap disaster wilt plague him."

They laughed at that. The fight slaves milled uneasily. Although they knew of the games, the word had been passed that Julian would enter none in the lists. Spartacus's face was expressionless but

his gray eyes were cold and glazed with hate. Thanks to Julian's drunkenness, the whole fiendish plot had been given away. Rage welled within the Spartan but he betrayed it not. He was of the land of stoics.

"So this be Spartacus," said Julian's sister and her eyes traveled over the slave's magnificently muscled body. "His fame be great."

"Come! Come!" cried Julian. "I weary of this."

The sister laughed.

"Aye! Thou wouldst view the ten female slaves."

**J**ULIAN shrugged and ordered that the slaves be brought in. On the floor, the red head had slyly opened the bodice of her robe to reveal some of the pert whiteness of her small breasts. Only Spartacus remained serene. The girl laughed drunkenly and lifted her skirt. White legs gleamed.

The female slaves, weighted with chains, were herded into the room. They varied in color from a coal black Nubian to a milk white maiden of the Rhine. All were ineffectively attired in tatters. Here and there a bare leg appeared and through rents small expanses of varicolored breasts were visible.

Expressions varied. The Nubian was dejected and resigned to her fate. The maid of the valley of the Rhine was smiling invitingly, as were others, to gain the favor of their new master and thereby win a life of ease and luxury.

Only one was defiant. She was a young girl of no great stature, yet superbly formed. Her black hair, blacker eyes, and olive swarthyness proclaimed her a daughter of Andalusia which was not yet Spain. She had obviously been roughly handled by the guards for her robe was in rags. Her left thigh and hip

The gloating Julian swayed before the chained girl.



were bare to the waist and reflected a golden shimmer. The cloth had been torn partly from her left breast but she had covered it with her hand; a gesture which accented the protrusion of the dome-shaped flesh and the smallness of her hand. Her beauty was of such intensity that a hush greeted her presence.

"A maid to my liking," declared Julian and rose to one elbow—a physical exertion for him.

"Thou shall have me not!" cried the

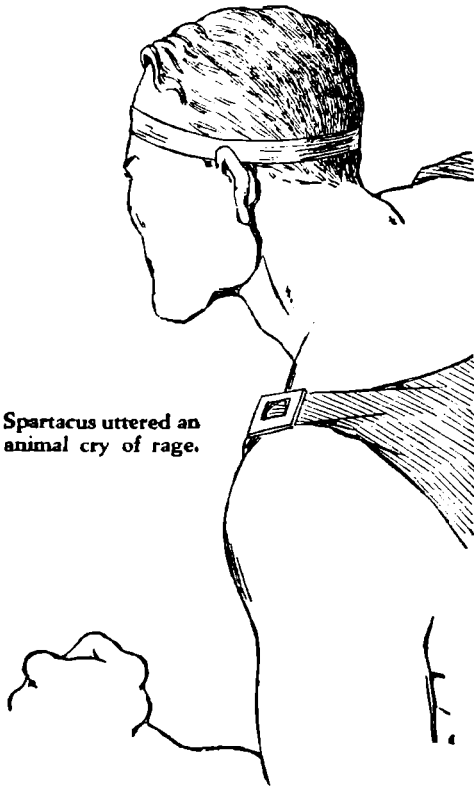
girl and faced him. This brought her back into Spartacus's line of vision; a gloriously nude back, wedge-shaped and so fine grained that it glistened like polished wood. He saw that her hips were richly curved in the first bloom of womanhood and that her legs were straight and finely shaped. Thrills raced through the Spartan. Here was a woman of his own kind; beautiful, desirable and spirited.

"Then shall thou clean the offal from

my kitchen until thy tune does change," said Julian with a yawn.

"Roman pig!" she cried between clenched teeth.

"Give her five lashes!" ordered Julian with a frown. "That wilt change her tune."



Spartacus uttered an animal cry of rage.

A burly guard stepped up. A long lash circled through the air. There was a sharp crack and a livid welt appeared on that glossy back. The girl cried out but did not wince. The lash flected out. It cut a furrow across her shoulder blades and the heavy tip snapped into the first swell of her breast. Blood came. Spartacus was fired with rage. Julian laughed, as did his sister. Aristius was pale. The lash cracked. The girl fell to one knee.

**S**OMETHING snapped in Spartacus's brain. His arms tensed. Chains parted like rotten cloth. He sprang toward Julian who was blubbering with fear. The red-haired slave jumped to her feet. Spartacus shoved her. She fell across Julian's stomach, turned completely over and landed on the other side of the couch. A lash bit into Spartacus's flesh. Many hands seized him. Consumed with rage, he jerked free. The burly guard spun him around and struck out with the butt of the lash.

Spartacus blocked the blow. His hard fist hit the guard in the mouth. He fell back spitting out blood and teeth. But many hands were seizing the Spartan. Bodies pressed against him. He fought desperately, hopelessly. He fell under the weight of numbers. Ropes were being tied to his wrists and ankles. His vision blurred a moment.

Then he was alone on the floor with Julian standing above him. To one side he could see the Andalusian. Her black eyes had lost their hate; were soft and grateful.

"Cursed Spartan!" cried Julian livid with rage.

He kicked Spartacus in the face. blood came. He kicked again and again. Flesh became swollen and numbed. But the gray eyes did not lose their hate. Then Julian had the lash and was laying it on with all the strength of his bloated body. The Spartan endured the torture without a vestige of pain. Then, mercifully, came unconsciousness.

**H**E RETURNED to consciousness in his dungeon. His body ached intolerably. But he got to his feet. Dizziness possessed him, but he endured it without protest. He felt his face. It was puffed and sore to the touch. Physically

he was a wreck of a man. But within him burned fierce fires of hate and determination.

Julian had been too loose with his tongue. Thirty and three days in the dungeon was explained. Could he, a lone slave, combat the power of Julian and the might of an Empire? Was there no way to avert this diabolical plot? He sat down and thought.

Presently he went to the wall and signaled.

"Joseph, 'tis Spartacus. Be the Andalusian well?"

"Ten more lashes she got. But she lives even though on a bed of blood."

"'Tis well. Hark ye well, Joseph! Pass the word that Spartacus wouldst speak with Aristius."

"Thou hast plans?" said the Judean excitedly.

"Aye! Death to Julian. Freedom for all of us."

Saying no more, Spartacus returned to the warmest corner of his dungeon and sat staring at the dark walls. A new sense of hope buoyed him. There was a smile on his cut lips—not a nice smile by any means.

"Spartacus wouldst speak with Aristius!"

By mysterious channels, the word sped. From the cleaning slave, it went to the villa. It traveled through the kitchen and to the stables. There a slave wrote it on the under side of a saddle while his companion kept guard. Later a servant came to the stables for a horse.

"If thou goest to the city," said one of the slaves, "thou shalt have the white steed. 'Tis the master's orders."

"Aye! I ride to the city."

The two slaves exchanged knowing glances. The saddle was put on the horse. The servant departed, reached the city and went to a public stable. There

a slave saw a small mark on the stirrup which foretold a message within the saddle. He read it carefully; memorized it. Another slave came in.

"Be there a steed of Aristius here?"

"Nay. But one of Marcus who lives nearby."

"Then bring me his saddle."

**T**HUS was the grapevine telegraph which all the might of Imperial Rome had not uncovered.

The news reached Aristius at supper. He frowned, turned to his lovely wife and said:

"Treachery brews at Julian's. If only this gladiator had devised the downfall of my cousin!" He got up and paced the floor. "The ruin of Julian wouldst please the Emperor for the fat fool waxes in wealth and power."

"Then thou shall go?" asked his wife.

"Aye! This Spartacus is a man to my liking."

**A**FTER a sleepless, foodless night, Spartacus was summoned to the crack. His face had lost some of its soreness but he was still weak and exhausted. Yet strong purpose drove away despair.

"Spartacus, 'tis Aristius?"

"Aristius! How got ye here?"

"By a ruse. In the guise of a physician. What knowest thou?"

"That Julian doest plan to gain riches beyond his fondest dream," said Spartacus bitterly. "For thirty and four days have I rotted in this cell. Knowest thou why?"

"Nay! It is senseless."

"'Tis the whim of a Satan. Julian weakens me that I lose to this gladiator of Gaul. He bets against me, for the odds be great. Then shall he prosper by my death."



There was a brief silence as Aristius's shocked brain accepted the devilish plan.

"And thy plan?" asked Aristius.

"I shall not die," declared Spartacus. "Bet ye all thy gold and treasures on me. Julian wilt wager his toga if needs be."

"But I have not such riches for thou art the favorite, and for each gold coin against thee I must answer with ten."

"Aye! But if tongues tattle of Julian's plan, then the odds wilt fall."

"But thou? If he starves thee, thou canst not win."

"I have thought of that. Two days before the game, contrive that the officials of the Coliseum shall visit here and examine my health."

"'Tis a cunning stroke!" declared Aristius in high humor. "For this, what doest thou desire?"

"Freedom for me and the Andalusian slave. Freedom for the fighting slaves. They shall fight as free men and pay you what thou wagers. But ask them."

There was the murmur of voices as Aristius consulted Joseph the Judean, nominal head of the fighting slaves. Soon Aristius returned to the crack.

"'Tis agreed. I trust thee, Spartacus. I wilt need gold beyond my riches. But I guard the Empress's jewels. Fail me not, for it would ruin me and bring death to my wife."

"I shall perish not!" declared Spartacus in a strong, purposeful voice. "There be others to think of. Be at peace, friend Aristius. Do thy part and I shall do mine."

Aristius departed. He was determined to follow the agreed plan. But misgivings assailed him. All his gold, all his property, and every possession of his wife's would not be enough. Well, he had the four gray Arabs, horses of great worth. He'd bet them too. And he could borrow the Empress's jewels. For a reason he

couldn't fathom, his faith in Spartacus was limitless.

THAT day Spartacus had a stroke of good fortune. He could reach the solitary window at the ceiling where he habitually clung, watching the yard. A sleek, well-fed cat of the villa had the misadventure to explore the barred window. A strong hand choked the life from its body. With his right arm scratched and bloody, Spartacus feasted. There was meat to spare. His spirits soared. The games were four days off.

The next day the gossip started by Aristius bore fruit. Many gamblers came to Julian demanding to see Spartacus. He demured. That night the odds fell. Slobbering with rage, Julian continued to bet. Then he was struck by an inspiration prompted by the devil himself.

"Get ye to these gamblers," he ordered his steward, "and tell them to repair here two days before the games. Then I shall show them Spartacus. In the meantime feed him well and remove him from the dungeon."

"But, sire? The bets?"

"Continue to bet on the Gaul. I have devised a plan."

"Then Spartacus shall fall?"

"Aye. He wilt die at the sword point of this Gaul." declared Julian and his pig-like eyes narrowed. He laughed. The problem was solved.

WELL-fed, carefully cared for, and provided with every comfort, Spartacus knew that terror of impending disaster which gave no clue as to its nature. Worry consumed him. Julian had devised his defeat. But how?

Two days before the games, gamblers and officials of the Coliseum visited the Spartan. They found him in perfect

health. The physician's examination revealed no reason why he should, from a physical standpoint, lose the combat.

"Thou cunning one," said a gambler to the leering Julian. "Thou started the rumor that the odds fall. Then did thou bet on thy gladiator?"

The odds immediately rose to new heights. One gold coin wagered on the Gaul demanded fifteen from those who bet on Spartacus. Aristius's faith never wavered. But his riches and those of his wife were pledged. The next day he would race his Arabs at the chariot races. He became nervous and absent-minded. His wife, who knew nothing of the matter, was concerned. But that night he would guard the precious jewels of his Empress!

**T**HE next day Aristius won the chariot races at the Circus Maximus! He decreed it a good omen. From the riches got from the pawned Empress's jewels, he covered every bet of Julian who had pledged his wealth down to every stone of his villa.

That night Spartacus, thanks to a compound made by the clever Judean, enjoyed a dreamless sleep. He awakened the day of the games refreshed and in splendid condition. But his brain was cold with fear. When the guards came to lead him to his master, he was seemingly possessed and unworried. They chained his wrists and led him to the kitchens. There they left him alone while they went to Julian for instructions.

A movement at the doorway captured Spartacus's attention. There stood the Andalusian viewing him with smouldering eyes!

She wore a sack-like robe, but even that could not hide the splendor of her figure. Her breasts tented the fabric

and, through the cloth, he could see the nut-brown gloss of them. A draught of air beat the skirt of the robe back against her legs outlining the fine firmness of her ample thighs and the delicious curves of her matchless hips.

Then she walked to him and her breasts began a faint swaying and trembling and her hips swayed with a seductive rhythm. Her full, scarlet lips were half parted to reveal white teeth and her nostrils were slightly dilated. Her eyes were black diamonds that sent a shiver down the Spartan's spine. Her mere presence was intoxicating. He swallowed the lump in his throat.

"I love thee!" she whispered in a fierce vibrant, tone. "Thou art assuredly my man. For always."

"And I thee love," he said very humbly. "The vision of thy loveliness hast haunted me. But for these bounds my arms would devour thee."

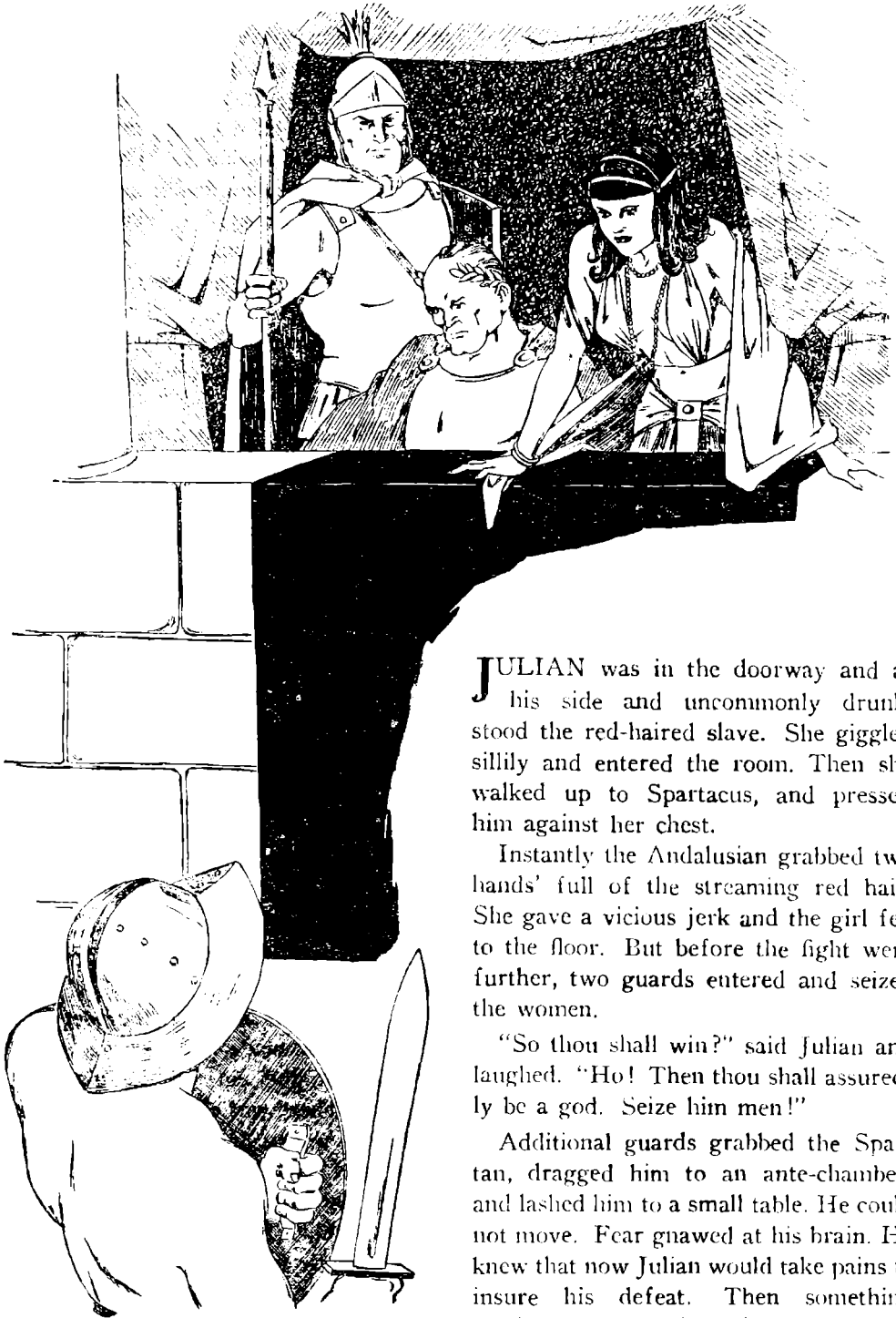
Then she took him in her arms and her wet lips closed on his mouth. Through the thin cloth the heat of her body fired him and the lush softness of her breasts flattened against the steel hard muscles of his chest to impart to his body an exotic weakness. Her mouth pressed hard on his lips until her body trembled and swayed like a column of flame.

When she released him, his lips were bruised and swollen from the fury of her kisses. Both were shaken and dizzy.

"That," she avowed, "is but a sample of the love that is thine." Her hand went to her breast, clutched as if striving to still the mad racing of her heart.

"And thou must win, Spartacus, my love. Come what will, thou must win. Thou swears to that?"

Mad laughter flooded the room before Spartacus could reply.



**J**ULIAN was in the doorway and at his side and uncommonly drunk, stood the red-haired slave. She giggled sillily and entered the room. Then she walked up to Spartacus, and pressed him against her chest.

Instantly the Andalusian grabbed two hands' full of the streaming red hair. She gave a vicious jerk and the girl fell to the floor. But before the fight went further, two guards entered and seized the women.

"So thou shall win?" said Julian and laughed. "Ho! Then thou shall assuredly be a god. Seize him men!"

Additional guards grabbed the Spartan, dragged him to an ante-chamber, and lashed him to a small table. He could not move. Fear gnawed at his brain. He knew that now Julian would take pains to insure his defeat. Then something crashed down on his skull and blackness closed in like a swift nightfall.

"In the leg," was the last thing he

"Slay the barbarian—or I forfeit my jewels," she whispered.

heard Julian say, "the straps of the sandals will conceal it."

**W**HEN Spartacus awakened, he saw that he was in the room wherein gladiators of the villa were prepared before going to the Coliseum. He was stretched out on a board and many hands were massaging him.

He moved and terror brought sweat to his brow. He was as weak as a kitten! His eyes clouded, then cleared. Joseph was there at his side. Slaves were packed about the table. He saw that the Andalusian was holding his hand. Her face was pale. Somehow, he managed to smile.

"A slave saw," whispered Joseph, for guards were at the door. "Julian hast had thou bled. The swine!"

The Andalusian left but quickly returned. The slaves packed tighter about the table. Stooping swiftly, she closed her mouth on his. Warm milk trickled between his lips. He sucked greedily.

"Thou art to have no food," she whispered, just as another female slave stooped and offered him a mouthful of milk. Others brought milk. Then the Andalusian again. Joseph was grim and wordless. The guards saw no one bearing food and were content.

"Blood he needs," said the Andalusian with a fierce resolve to the silent Joseph. "They say that thou wert a physician in thy homeland. Is there no way?"

"Aye! A method I learned from the Egyptians. But 'tis dangerous. A bubble of air and he wilt perish should it enter his blood stream."

"He wilt perish anyway. Come! We of Andalusia are rich in blood."

"Aye!" whispered someone. "There is a glass tube here."

With the Andalusian's arm pressed tight to his, Spartacus watched as Jos-

eph got out a knife. Both arms were opened. The tube was inserted. The Spartan was vaguely conscious that new heat was passing into his blood. He saw the Andalusian gradually grow pale. His fingers lost their coldness. The girl wet her lips. She was unafraid. Soon it was over. Joseph smeared a stinging ointment on the incisions.

"Be quick!" warned someone. "The guards."

The guards came into the room.

"Get him dressed!" was ordered.

**E**AGER hands fastened on the sandals and wound the straps to the calf. His waist was sashed and about it was fastened a wide metal girdle. Soft leather bound his wrists for greater strength. Joseph, who was to accompany him, held the visored helmet. The sword would be at the coliseum.

"Ha!" laughed a guard. "Julian is too drunk to attend the games. He dallies with the red head."

Outside a chariot was waiting. Spartacus was feeling stronger. But he acted weak and dazed. He and Joseph climbed in behind the driver. Mounted guards surrounded them to prevent any attempt to escape. A servant ran from the house.

"The Tartar is to return with the tidings," he called.

The Tartar nodded and they set out. Good time was made. They arrived without incident and entered the gladiator quarters. There was confusion there but Spartacus was well guarded. Aristius, white and shaking, forced his way through the crowd.

"Fear not!" Spartacus confided. "I gain strength every moment. See me before I enter the arena."

Aristius vanished. Julian's steward replaced him.

"If thou winst," he whispered to Spar-

tacus, "Julian wilt have the Andalusian ravished. Afterward her body wilt be fed to the dogs."

Overhead, came the roar of forty-five thousand spectators as some contest ended. Then came the impatient shuffling of feet as patrons consulted their programs. Next Spartacus, their favorite, would meet the Gaul! What rumors had been going around?

Joseph fastened on the shield. Spartacus raised it, held it over his head then lowered it. He was slow. That worried him. The bleeding had weakened him more than he'd thought.

"Ready, Spartacus!" called an official.

He got up and went to the iron doors to the arena just as the bloody corpse of a man was carried in. He took the helmet from Joseph. Aristius came up.

"Do as I bid," said Spartacus. "Con-  
trive to stop the Tartar who wilt carry the tidings to Julian. He is the man with the black beard. Then have for me outside thy own chariot with thyself at the reins. The combat Julian shall hear from my lips."

With his shield at attention and the helmet cradled in his right arm, Spartacus stood awaiting the summons. It came—the blare of trumpets.

He marched into the field to be greeted by a great ovation of cheering. The stands rose as one man and cheer after cheer flooded the city. And why not—here was the gladiator of all times; the man who had slain fifty more than his nearest rival.

Officials were in the center of the field leveling the turf. Spartacus marched toward the Imperial box at one end of the Coliseum and from the corner of his eye appraised the Gaul who was angling in from the opposite side. They arrived together and made their salutations to the Emperor and Empress.

That Julian wasn't there, pleased Spartacus.

The Empress leaned over the rail of the box. She was a superb beauty. She smiled but her eyes were worried.

"All Rome wishes thee well," she told Spartacus. "Slay this barbarian. Slay him else. . ." She lowered her voice "else I forfeit my jewels."

**I**N shocked silence, Spartacus saluted, wheeled and marched toward the center of the field. Aristius had told the Empress! And she had pledged her jewels. His heart choked with pride. Why, the fate of the Empire might hinge on this combat!

He did not listen to the instructions he knew by heart. Fear numbed his brain. Not for himself but for the Andalusian. She was weak from loss of blood. Her resistance would be low. That brown, sleek body offered to Julian! He shivered.

His helmet was put on. It was padded and fit snugly about his head. The visor was cunningly fashioned to encompass his face and chin. The straps were adjusted at his neck. Through the tiny slits, he saw the Gaul. His opponent was a mountain of a man, barrel chested, and a head taller than the Spartan. Moreover he was supremely confident; almost strutting. Then Spartacus knew that the Gaul knew of his weakness. The blare of trumpets ended thought.

As was the custom, they were first given wooden swords and began their mock combat. Before the silly custom had gone far, howls from the stands prompted the Emperor to end the fray. They were given short steel swords with a guarded hilt and a double cutting edge.

For a moment or so they tested the balance of their weapons. The Gaul cut

*(Continued on page 119)*

# BLOOD AND FIRE

[Continued from page 27]

great strokes through the air but the Spartan merely flexed his wrist. The balance was excellent. No need to show off. Strength was precious. He was tense. His knees shook. Would the signal ever come? It did.

**T**HE Gaul, intent on winning in a rush, charged forward with a powerful sword-blow started behind his back. Spartacus slid the blow off his shield. No need to take the shock of the blow. He countered with a fast, waist-high sweep. The Gaul barely blocked it in time. Spartacus followed up with three dazzling chops aimed first at the man's head, then at his waist, then at his thigh.

The Gaul sparred cautiously. Spartacus had expended precious strength. But it was necessary to prove his prowess. The Gaul had a taste of the skill that had slain a hundred men. He didn't like it. But he countered gamely as Spartacus was content to assume the defensive.

This gave the Spartan a chance to study his opponent's technique.

The Gaul favored a fast overhand stroke rich with power. The intent was obvious. To smash the shield a solid blow. A few would paralyze the shield arm. Spartacus knew that. He deflected each cut; diverted some to earth, others above his head. The Gaul had a nice recovery.

The stands fell silent. The Empress hugged her breast and kept biting her lips. Even the Emperor, who knew nothing of the jewels, sat on the edge of his seat. The crowd seemed to sense in Spartacus's actions the drama and tragedy of this combat. Only the metallic clatter of sword on shield filled the air.

Then Spartacus brought the crowd to their feet with an amazing display of mixed overhand and side blows that made his shining sword seem everywhere about the Gaul. He ended the sally with a dexterous upcut aimed between the

man's legs. The blow was adroitly blocked. Good sword play that!

But the Gaul had retreated. Spartacus pressed his advantage with a sudden lunge. The sword point struck the Gaul's metal girdle and slithered up to his naked chest. It drew blood. The crowd roared. But Spartacus was not deceived. A mere prick. He followed through with a difficult reverse stroke at the Gaul's sword side. The Gaul barely managed to block with his sword hilt. Even so the blow grazed his right side. More blood. The crowd was in a frenzy now.

Then the Gaul opened up with an attack that sickened Spartacus. He still favored the overhand stroke but Spartacus was no longer able to deflect them. The Gaul had cunningly observed the precise tilt of his opponent's shield. He altered his straight stroke to a fast arc that was catching the shield solidly.

**S**PARTACUS'S shield arm was numbing. Slowly it lowered. But he was still blocking. Sparks flew from metal. He tried to deflect a blow upward above his head. It was a mistake. He knew that his shield was too low, the instant the Gaul's sword struck.

The blow slithered from the shield and ploughed into the softer metal of Spartacus's helmet. Fear seized him. He wavered. Blood was coursing down his neck. Somehow he managed to block the next blow. But the one after that caught him off balance. He tripped and fell to one knee. Just in time he jerked the shield over his head. The down-rushing sword struck solidly. Spartacus's spine bent like a twig. He couldn't get up! Panic seized him.

A groan came from the crowd. Spartacus awaited the end.

But the Gaul, having tasted his op-

ponent's skill, was cautious. He feared a sham and backed a step away. Spartacus's strength returned. He could have gotten up, but he didn't. A clever plan shot through his brain.

Would the Gaul use both hands in wielding the sword for the final blow that would lop off Spartacus's head?

He did!

Assured that the Spartan was indeed unable to get up, the Gaul dropped his shield, took the sword in both hands, and lowered it behind his back. It was the moment Spartacus had prayed for!

With incredible speed, the Spartan's sword shot out in a wide semi-circle some six inches above the ground! The Gaul tried to jump away. Too late! The sharp steel chopped through his left ankle, slowed little, then struck off his right foot. The Gaul fell screaming. Spartacus jumped to his feet. The bloody sword dropped behind his back. It flashed a great arc in the sunlight.

The Gaul's head was severed at the neck. So great was the impact that the head rolled dismally away. The severed neck spurted twin streams of blood; pulsating blood diminishing in pressure and volume.

Spartacus ran to the dressing rooms. Joseph was there. He tugged off the helmet and let the Judean slap an already prepared bandage on the wound. Then he raced to the street. Julian's guards were too amazed to stop him.

**O**UTSIDE, Aristius was holding the gray Arabs. The Spartan leaped to the chariot. They were off like the wind with the roar of the crowd in their ears like distant thunder. The two men exchanged a handshake more eloquent than words.

"The death of Julian wilt not be

probed," said Aristius. "The Empress so promises."

Spartacus said nothing. Soon they clattered into the court yard of the villa. Hoofs drew sparks from the stones as they skidded to a stop. As Aristius held the rearing Arabs, Spartacus sprinted to the villa.

He raced to the great room and stopped short. The Andalusian had been tied to the wall and in front of her swayed the gloating Julian. Only an expanse of cloth at the groin covered her. In the hot light her thighs gave off a rich brown lustre as the firm, taut skin held a mirror-like sheen. Her ripe breasts were starkly protruding and the upward and outward position of her arms had drawn them out and upward to form a deep valley between their lofty heights. Glossy black hair spilled about one boneless shoulder to glisten hotly against the smooth golden flesh. It was a glorious sight—save for Julian.

The Roman's eyes were avid, eager, bestial. He could barely control his frenzy of passion.

**S**PARTACUS uttered an animal cry of rage and in five great strides had caught the hapless Julian by the nape of the neck. The Roman paled and began to whimper like a whipped puppy. Spartacus knocked him to the floor where he lay slobbering with fear; his pig's eyes glazed and dilated.

"Thou diest!" yelled Spartacus, "a death deserving the deaths thou hast wrought. A hundred ravished maidens wilt this day be avenged."

But how? Then the warmth of the room caused Spartacus to smile. Stooing, he jerked the Roman to his feet, twisted his arm and obtained a paralyz-

ing grip on the nape of his neck. He forced the Roman forward—toward the couches.

Julian screamed and fought. A brazier of red hot coals was drawing closer. Soon the smoke struck their bodies. The Spartan's arm shoved with a resistless power. Mercifully Julian fainted. His head went down. Down and on down. There came a horrifying hissing as his nose ground into the embers. On down! The hissing redoubled. Blue smoke curled ceilingward.

The stench of burning flesh and hair filled the room with a putrid stench. On down. Clouds of smoke now. One could not see the head. Then a gust of wind swept away the smoke. Jets of steam were spurting from the crisping ears.

Spartacus released him. He fell face up on the floor. He was dead. He had no face. Just a charred black hole still smouldering. Blood oozed, met the fiery flesh, and turned to steam. It was a ghastly, blood-chilling sight. Spartacus turned him over.

Then he released the Andalusian. She fainted in his arms. Her body was pleasantly cool against his feverish flesh. He put her on a couch and kissed her lips. She revived.

"We art free," he told her.

"To love?"

"Aye to love."

She smiled.

"The blood of Andalusians flows like hot beady wine. Does not that worry thee?"

He laughed.

"By the gods! Is not half the blood in my veins Andalusian?"

"We shalt see," she said dreamily, "we shalt see."



**A**ND her eyes became pools of desire and the majesty of her breasts rose in their full glory as she inhaled deeply. Spartacus's mouth watered at the lusciousness of her lips. Her loveliness was a magnet: drawing him closer and closer.

When Aristius came in, he gave one startled look and tip-toed from the place. In the heart of Rome his own wife would be rising from her bath her perfect body dripping rose-scented water. The vision was enchanting—and he remembered he must be the first to acquaint her of the news of Julian's death.

How far was it? Would there be time?

The whip cracked over the heads of the gray Arabs. Sparks flew beneath flailing hoofs. The chariot slewed through the gates on one wheel. Manes came back in the wind like battle flags.

Aristius was to surpass his record at the Circus Maximus.