Salve Famalia,

Recently, I became a gladiator. I had no choice. My slave owner was sick of me and decided that selling me to a tirones would be an appropriate punishment for my wrongdoings. As I walked through the gate of the gladiator school I was examined by a doctor and a tirones, who admitted people based on physical appearance. I was one of few admitted as a novicius. Before I began my training, I had to sign an auctoramentum with the lanista and swear sacramentum. The school is now my home. My room is a three by four meter windowless cell inside a barrack. Around me are identical cells; some fortunate enough to have windows, while other rooms are like mine. For meals, we had a strict diet of barley and beans which we ate together in a big canteen on one of the shorter sides of the training ground.

The school I am in is one of four schools in Rome clustered around the Colosseum. The training ground is well-equipped, and I spend the majority of my days there. Along the sides of the training ground are small boxes where people can come and watch us train. Most of the time it is the lanista checking on us, but sometimes the boxes are occupied by women who come to admire the gladiators of the primus palus. Each gladiator has a wooden training post to practice their skills, but we all have a different training routine depending on the weapons given to us by the lanista. To help us train, we are given a doctores who is a retired gladiator that specializes in the weapons given to us. My trainer is a former retiarius named Serpentius. He is very skilled with all three weapons: the trident, net, and dagger. Under his supervision, I train countless hours each day. He always tells me that quickness and accuracy are the keys to success as a retiarius, and he stresses the importance of stabbing rather than slashing since stabbing is more likely to inflict a fatal blow. These things held true in my first match against a secutor where I utilized my speed to take advantage of his heavy equipment and limited field of vision.
I could tell from the way he fought that he was also an inexperienced gladiator. We were both very cautious for the beginning of the fight, but this quickly changed after the crowd started throwing rocks at us. This sparked the foolish man inside him and he began rushing at me continuously with his gladius. After he was defeated by exhaustion, I was able to net him and pin him down with my dagger. Shouts of “peractum est” came from the crowd, and I was given the cue to kill him. Through the narrow holes in his helmet, I could see fear in his eyes and I felt sorry. I didn’t want to kill him, but I had no choice. The look in his eyes as my dagger pierced through his neck is an image that will remain with me, but it is something I must forget if I want to be the best.

After the battle, I am examined by a doctor at the medical facility next to the canteen to check my status. Some of the surviving gladiators suffer head trauma from getting hit by the shield of their opponent. People with open wounds have their blood caught in a container since their blood can be used to help people with some kind of problem. Collecting blood in a container is a sane way to help these people; some of them just drink blood from the throats or skulls of dead gladiators.

My examination after my first battle was good, and the lanista was proud of my performance. I received 750 sestertii of the 3000 that the lanista earned from my victory. He said that the more I win the more money I will receive. After our brief discussion about future events, I went back to my training with Serpentius who has become my best friend. Normally I would not open myself up to another gladiator, but I trust him. He sets me up for victory and helps me improve each day. Since he is retired, I have no fear in losing him or meeting him in the battleground. Yesterday, he informed me of the Seneca and Cicero, two writers who do not approve of gladiators. I became uneasy when I heard this because I felt the same way. I don’t
like the violence and killing involved in this profession, but at the same time I have no choice and it is better than being a slave. Even though I am marked by infamia, I have a sense of worthiness here. For once in my life I feel like I matter, not to mention I am also earning my share of sestertii. Although I will not be able to change my past as a slave and erase the title of infamia, I will be able to buy my freedom sooner or later. On a happier note, Serpentius also told me that he saw my name along the walls of the school. It looks like I’m starting to get some fans. He said I should adopt a name, something that would be more appealing to women. What do you think? If I keep winning my fights, I don’t think my name will be an issue. I will gain more fame and more fans in the process. As far as the future goes, I am not sure if I want to continue being a gladiator after I become a freedman. Perhaps I will take on a normal life and become a merchant of some sort. There is no telling what the future holds.

Vale Familia.