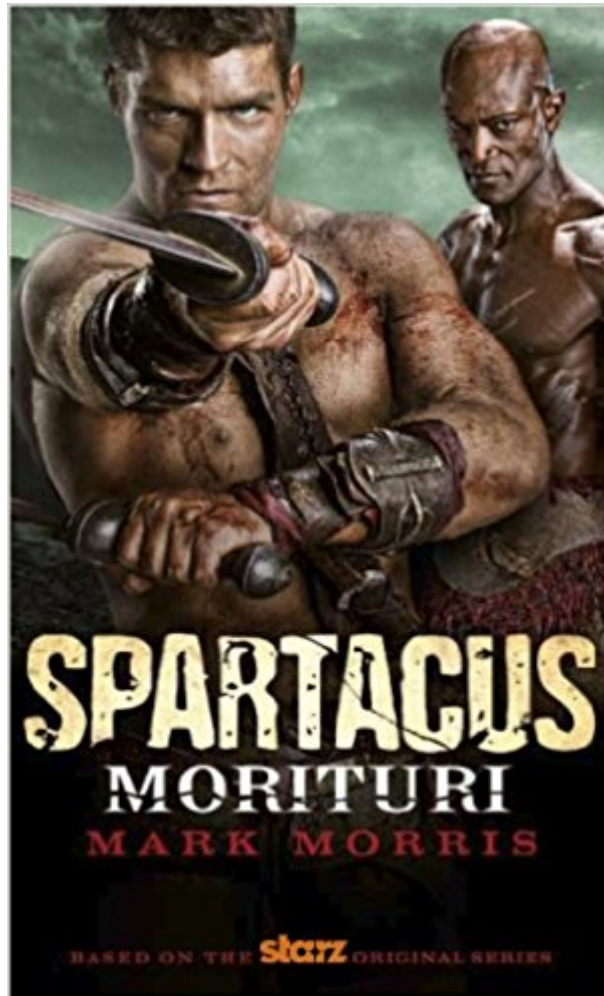




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# Spartacus: Morituri



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## Synopsis

Batiatus and Solonius vie with each other for the favor of one Marcus Licinius Crassus, an equites who aims at the praetorship. Thrilled by the bloody violence of the fights, Crassus decides to set-up his own gladiatorial school.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This might prove to be the not-at-all-guilty pleasure of the season." (Entertainment Weekly)"

Mark Morris is the author of several novels, including *Stitch*, *The Immaculate*, *The Deluge* and four *Doctor Who* books. He is editor of the award-winning *Cinema Macabre*, a book of fifty horror movie essays by genre luminaries. Most recently he wrote the official tie-in novel to zombie apocalypse computer game *Dead Island* and a novelisation of the 1971 Hammer movie *Vampire Circus*.

The last Spartacus novel 'Swords and Ashes' wasn't a masterpiece, but it successfully scratched the itch for more insight into the incredible world Starz entertainment has created. It was an all-around solid read and fans appreciated the gesture. Now we have the second and supposedly final novel for the Spartacus television series. With the show unfortunately coming to an end with *War of the Damned*, Starz has given the fans one final hurrah before the epic finale in the form of

Spartacus: Morituri. Morituri takes place during the show's first season, 'Blood and Sand.' Meaning Spartacus is the current Champion of Capua, Batiatus is still among the living, and the show's general focus was on gladiator combat and all the political intrigue that goes on behind the scenes. The plot begins when Batiatus runs into the rich merchant, now turned lanista known as Hieronymus, and his harrowing assistant, Mantilus. After a rather unpleasant exchange on Batiatus's behalf, he quickly discovers Hieronymus's fortune is funded by the illustrious Marcus Licinius Crassus, a figure in history that people most undoubtedly will recognize. With Hieronymus entering the shady business of a lanista, it seems like fair game for both Batiatus and Solonius. That is, until a strange sickness begins to affect the gladiators under both their houses. With no explanation in sight, blame quickly gets shifted to the presence of spirits affecting the living. With upcoming contest approaching against Hieronymus's ruthless Morituri gladiators and the men drained both physically and mentally, it's up to Spartacus to uncover the truth behind their decline, or else death will surely meet them all among the sands. I feel the real reason why many tie-in novels fail to truly wow me isn't because of the author's lack of skill (which Morris has plenty of), but rather the very limited sense of freedom they're given when writing about the show and its characters. With a storyline as tightly-woven as the one found in Spartacus, both Morris and Clements before him are given minimal liberty to experiment with the characters and make even more compelling stories, lest they make plot-holes and have fans of the series roast them and their work. I feel this was the case with Swords and Ashes, albeit it was still an entertaining book that stayed true to the source material while not taking any chances of its own. Because of this, there's nothing in either of these novels that will redefine the way you look at any of the characters or the show, nor is there any eureka moments where things fit perfectly together with the series mythology. With that said, even with the drastic creative handicap placed on Morris, he still managed to make a solid book that fans of the series will definitely enjoy. Anyone who's even remotely interested in reading this book will be among the hardest of the hardcore fans like myself. Because of this, I'm not going to bother going into detail about the show's iconic characters since everyone will already be familiar with them from watching the show. What's important is how well Morris is able to emulate their mannerisms to the point where their every action in the book comes off feeling natural, which he does, mostly. There were two characters inconsistencies that I found in the book, (though I'm such a dork for this show that I'll probably be the only one who does notice them.) The first was Oenomaus's respect for Spartacus as the Champion of Capua. At this point in the show's timeline, Oenomaus considered Spartacus an honorless dog for trying to defile his very way of life by escaping the ludus, thus making his inner respect for him stand out of character. The second issue

also involves Spartacus; it was his nonchalant outlook on being a gladiator. After going through a tragic turning point in his life, there was a time in the first season where Spartacus actually enjoyed being the champion and the glory it bestowed upon him. Again, minor things that only the most avid of fans would probably notice, so I won't hold them against Morris. Aside from those two small mishaps, the characterization of the show's roster is spot-on, making Morituri feel like an authentic Spartacus episode. There's a great deal of work that goes into emulating the show's cast of characters and then shifting it into a literary format. Yet it's also monumentally important to properly replicate the look and feel of the show's style, voice, and graphic content. Morris nails this area with no flaws. Every intricate detail from the show is present in Morituri, the bloody fights to the death, the over the top sexuality, even Batiatus's comedic profanity. Serious props must also be given to Morris being able to mimic the show's dialogue. It's done very well and continues to reinforce the authentic vibe of the television show. Like the Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero who guest starred in *Swords and Ashes*, Morituri also sports an actual historical figure in the form of Marcus Crassus. While his role in the novel is quite limited, he still leaves a powerful impression, making his presence in the book help ground the novel in the realm of plausibility, thus making me even more excited to see him on the screen as the villain in *War of the Damned*. I also really liked what Morris was able to bring new to the table that hasn't and most likely will never be explored on the show. While he maintains the series' mainstays of gladiator fights and political backstabbing, he also manages to incorporate a light dose of mystery and superstition, completely befitting of a place and era whose culture was so heavily influenced by a sense of mysticism. These newer aspects are incorporated flawlessly into the already preexisting elements of the show, making it feel less like a retreading and more like a fresh new take on them. Like all tie-in novels, Morituri isn't going to blow your mind or anything, but it will satisfy fans of the show who need more Spartacus. The plot was solid all-around, though it won't rival the show's masterful writing anytime soon. But it provided enough intrigue to keep me hooked, even if the climax was rather lackluster. Yet despite a few glaring issues, the characters were well illustrated along with the show's style and personality, and overall it's a solid book.

*Spartacus: Morituri*, published in 2012, is the second of two official companion novels associated with the Spartacus television series from the Starz cable network. If you haven't seen the show, stop reading this review and go seek out the DVDs. This book is strictly for fans of the series. Those who enjoy the show and are eager for more blood, sweat, and wine will find their parched throats only adequately moistened, their thirsts not entirely quenched. The novel takes place at some point in the

latter half of season one. Spartacus has defeated Theokoles to become the Champion of Capua, while Crixus lies injured in the infirmary. The story opens with Batiatus shopping at a slave auction, where he is outbid by a mysterious Greek. This newcomer, named Hieronymus, intends to open a new ludus in Capua, to rival the existing gladiatorial houses of Batiatus and Solonius. Though the two experienced lanistae fear little from this novice and his untrained stock of fighters, Hieronymus soon proves quite successful at his newly chosen profession. His gladiators, nicknamed morituri--those who are about to die--perform above and beyond expectations. Is this good fortune the result of beginner's luck, or, as many suspect, a product of black magic?The Spartacus television series presented a unique vision of the ancient Roman Empire, replete with graphic sex and violence and populated by dozens of fascinating characters. Fans of the show who read this book can't help but enjoy a return to that vivid world. Yet there is such a thing as being too faithful to the source material. This novel reads like a collection of familiar scenes that have been snipped from the show and reassembled into an all-too-familiar knockoff. Batiatus, in hopes of acquiring some much needed coin, entertains a wealthy dignitary by throwing an orgiastic party where he presents his gladiatorial stock. How many times did we see that in seasons one and two? Naevia nurses Crixus, Solonius hits on Lucretia, and Oenomaus cracks his whip like they've all done dozens of times before. There's little attempt here to try anything new. The author does introduce one real-life historical Roman personage into the proceedings, but he's mostly a bystander and not integral to the plot. There is a thread of mystery throughout the book, as the gladiators of Batiatus fall prey to an unknown illness, but this puzzle turns out to be about as baffling as a Scooby-Doo caper, and the reader will surely solve the mystery six or seven chapters before Spartacus does. In fact, many of the intended surprises are foreshadowed so heavily--"hint, hint: this guy's going to die"--that one can see the twists and turns coming a mile away. Part of the problem, of course, is that author Mark Morris basically has his hands tied. The novel can't interfere with the continuity of the TV series, so the end result of the story is destined to maintain the status quo. When an unfamiliar gladiator enters the story, one can be sure that his fate will be the same as any nameless red-shirted crew member of the Starship Enterprise. However, the first novel to be set in this world, Spartacus: Swords and Ashes by J.M. Clements, did a much better job of pushing the envelope and demonstrating that it's possible to breathe new life into these characters. Clements was also better at capturing the gritty yet decadent atmosphere of the show and duplicating its clever dialogue. After reading Swords and Ashes, I wondered why they didn't publish more books to accompany this wonderful television series. After reading Morituri, I kind of understand why they stopped at two.

While I will probably never get over the loss of the wonderful STARZ television series Spartacus (upon which this book is based), at least I can relive the glory through the books. Morituri was well-written and fast-paced. Enjoyed it tremendously. I hope that Mark Morris writes another Spartacus book ASAP. Or -- even better -- a book about the rock star gladiator Gannicus. Maybe a peek into the lost years between Gannicus gaining his freedom in the arena and when he joined the Rebellion? My will, your hands, Mark Morris. I would buy that book in a heartbeat.

You know what you're buying, it's a story set in a highly stylized premium channel TV show. If a story set in that world is appealing then you'll enjoy it. Mindless entertainment.

Boring

Great if you love the show. Kind of predictable, but there are some twists that are interesting. It's just a fun exploration of what could have been an episode.

Kept right with the tradition of the Spartacus Starz Series. Also read Sword and Ashes, the two are not tied but make perfect sense in relationship with the series.

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