

# **A Gladiator on the town**

By John Waterhouse

**(excerpt)**

The play was first performed at Salford Arts Theatre on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011 in the 'Not Part Of' Festival.

**Cast –**

Livia: Rachel Horley

Marcus- Simon Pennicott

Gallus - Derek Lawson

Serapas - Barry Ryan English

Pulcheria - Carol Breton

Claudia - Jo English

The play was directed by Scott Berry.

## Characters

**Livia - 20s** Daughter of Gallus and Pulcheria. Runs a horse stud and is married to Marcus. Beautiful with a strong, dynamic character. Determined to live life on her terms as an emancipated woman in a very patriarchal society. However, she is devoted to her husband, whom she had originally helped escape from life as a gladiator.

**Marcus - 20s** Runs olive farm and is married to Livia. Marcus is a former-gladiator, who has been granted his freedom. He had originally served in the army under Gallus, and fate had later reunited them, in Ostia.

**Gallus - 40s** Magistrate of Ostia. After a successful army career, Gallus has moved into public life in the prosperous port town of Ostia. Gallus take his work seriously as a matter of public duty and will not accept bribes or inducements.

**Pulcheria - 40s** Wife of Gallus. Very much the first lady of the town of Ostia, who enjoys dressing to impress and holding parties and dinners to impress her status upon the community.

**Claudia - 30s** A merchant who has arrived in Ostia. Voluptuous and lively; Tall and sophisticated, Claudia can rival Livia's looks and personality. In addition, she comes from the city of Rome and looks on the outlying towns with a slightly patronising condescension. Claudia exudes a determination that implies if she wants something, she will have it.

**Serapas: - 40s** A mysterious, dark-skinned Arab trader from the East. He expresses interest in Livia's horses but seems to be equally interested in Livia. Serapis is both charming and polite but there is an aura of something darker lying behind this exterior. He clearly is from a different world, which whilst still part of the Roman empire, is distant in both geography and culture. However, he is educated and speaks Latin well.

## Scenes

### Act One –

**P 4. Act One Scene 1**      Gallus's house      Day 1 - 10am  
Livia and her husband Marcus are staying at her parents' house and we learn that Gallus is to become a consul. Marcus has an important business client, due to meet him very soon.

**P 17. Act One Scene 2**      Gallus' house      Day 1 - Noon  
Serapas, the Arab trader, is entertained by Gallus. On hearing of his interest in horses, Livia invites him to her house.

**P 21. Act One Scene 3**      Gallus' house      Day 1 - Afternoon  
Claudia is flirtatious with Marcus on their second meeting. Livia meets Serapas as agreed, and is surprised to find Marcus there. Suspicious, Livia invites everyone for dinner to try to suss out Claudia.

**P 23. Act One Scene 4**      Gallus's house      Day 1 - 6.00pm  
Claudia and Serapas have a tour of the grounds whilst Livia and Marcus compare notes. It turns out that both have been invited to Gallus's for a celebratory meal the following night.

**P 27. Act One Scene 5**      Gallus' house      Day 2 - Noon  
Livia is furious to find out that Pulcheria has been angling to get Marcus onto the council. Gallus receives a bottle of wine from a well-wisher but it is poisoned. Luckily, Gallus only takes a sip and survives. The feast is still on for that evening.

**P 31. Act One Scene 6**      Gallus' house      Day 2 - Evening  
The party is in full swing. Gallus talks to Serapas. Claudia gets Marcus alone. Pulcheria is delighted that Livia is showing some sense by dressing properly. Livia begins to wonder if Serapas is the assassin and aims to keep him occupied to stop him trying to kill Gallus.

### Act Two –

**P 36. Act Two Scene 1**      Adrianus' house – Upstairs      Day 3 - Lunchtime.  
Livia visits Serapas upstairs at the bar of Adrianus. Livia is drugged and Serapas puts her to one side as Claudia enters; the two of them are clearly in collusion but they have different agenda. Marcus, Gallus and Pulcheria all call round, for different reasons. Livia comes round after having been drugged. Livia realises that they must do something if Gallus' life is threatened by Serapas. Livia disguises herself as a sophisticated tradeswoman and arranges to meet Serapas in secret that evening to reveal some valuable gold cloth. Serapas arranges to meet Livia but Claudia has seen Livia with Marcus and reveals this to Serapas.

**P 59. Act Two Scene 2**      Adrianus' house – Upstairs      Day 3 - Evening  
Serapas kidnaps Livia thinking she is Juliana. Gallus arrives as requested by Claudia but Pulcheria is with him. Serapas gets her to go downstairs with him, then Marcus arrives looking for Livia. Gallus goes out with Marcus and Livia meanwhile escapes and takes care of Claudia, putting her in the box. Gallus and Marcus arrive back, having not found Livia and they put the box outside ready for Serapas's men. Pulcheria returns and with Claudia not there, they leave. Only Marcus and Livia are left and Marcus give false information to Serapas to leave at once.

## Act One Scene One The house of Gallus.

### Day 1 10.00 am

*LIVIA is wearing a bright coloured, provocative dress and looking at herself in the mirror whilst humming to herself. She arranges her hair in a wild 'rock chick' manner. Satisfied, she sits down and puts on some heavy eye shadow. MARCUS enters in rough, working clothes as LIVIA is striking various poses.*

**Livia:** Have you had a good day dear?

**Marcus:** Yeah not bad. (*LIVIA turns to look at him*) Bloody hell, you didn't tell me you'd taken up witchcraft!

**Livia:** I haven't!

*They kiss. MARCUS sits down and LIVIA sits on his lap.*

**Livia:** An interesting visitor called round earlier.

**Marcus:** Oh yeah? The Chief Druid perhaps? or was it the God of the underworld?

**Livia:** Neither; Proculus!

**Marcus:** Proculus? I thought he was still in Rome. He's not thinking of putting you in the arena as some sort of She-Devil, is he?

**Livia:** No, he came here to see my father but he was pleased to see me here because it turns out that he's looking for young, supple flesh!

**Marcus:** He's looking for what?

*LIVIA gets up.*

**Livia:** Horseflesh. Proculus had already heard about my stables and by lucky chance, he's got two good charioteers and wants to enter them in Rome.

**Marcus:** Two teams of four? Hey, that could mean up to eight horses?

**Livia:** Well done! Provided that they're good runners, course.

**Marcus:** That would probably mean selling most of the stallions.

**Livia:** Well there's one stallion he's not having (*LIVIA puts her arms round MARCUS'S neck*). If this gets the stable business known round the Circus Maximus, who knows where it could lead? (*LIVIA sits next to MARCUS*).

**Marcus:** Will Proculus be racing in the Circus Maximus?

**Livia:** That's what he's said! At least, that's what he's hoping for.

**Marcus:** He really has moved up in the world.

**Livia:** Once I've decided which horses he can have, I'm to let him know. He's staying in Ostia for a few days.

**Marcus:** I suppose your mother will invite us over for a meal with him.

**Livia:** She already has!

**Marcus:** Ah, so that's what you're dressing up for.

**Livia:** Correct. I want to find a look that's suitably inappropriate.

**Marcus:** So as to discourage your mother from asking you to go out with her, to meet her delightful friends?

**Livia:** Boring old mares you mean! Would you like to go out for dinner with them?

**Marcus:** Not really.

**Livia:** Anyway, you're back early from the farm. (*LIVIA takes off the eye shadow and lets down her hair*).

**Marcus:** The men have worked hard since early morning so I let them go early. Lucius did have an invitation in town.

**Livia:** Really, letting slaves rush off to dinner engagements; you wouldn't think that we actually owned them! (*LIVIA takes off the dress to reveal a simple, working tunic underneath*). I'm surprised that you didn't tell them that whilst we're staying here, they could throw a wild orgy in the farmhouse and turn the barn into a tavern!

**Marcus:** Well, I did have to lend Lucius 20 sesterces.

**Livia:** What for? He's not trying to hire that big blonde girl from Lucius's bawdyhouse again is he? If he's taken anyone back to the farm.....

**Marcus:** No, no. On the contrary, he wants to actually take out some girl, from the steam baths and impress her! Probably hoping to have a steamy time with her, to boot! (*laughs*)

**Livia:** So we've got slaves taking out other slaves on dinner dates! Are you trying to undermine the whole Roman way of life, Marcus?

**Marcus:** Well, no. Paulus was complaining again that it's slave labour. I did point out to him that he is actually a slave.

**Livia:** Marvellous!

**Marcus:** Anyway I don't really think of them as slaves. If the farm expands, they'll share in the profits.

**Livia:** You're too good; just like my father.

**Marcus:** I've learned a lot from him.

**Livia:** His year as magistrate has gone well but I can't see him running for the Senate of Rome. Anyway, could you really imagine my mother as a Senator's wife?

**Marcus:** Too damn right I could and so can you. The house would be like a restaurant! One continuous dinner party interspersed with visits to the market to buy up all the new stocks of silks and dyed linen!

**Livia:** I suppose you're right.

**Marcus:** Not to mention the on-going commentary on Gallus (*effects posh lady's voice*) My husband had to settle a most important dispute today involving two councillors accusing other's wives of having private orgies; oh the things I could tell you....and I will! (*reverts to his own voice*) I hope your father doesn't try to tempt me with another job in the council.

**Livia:** You could do very well for yourself there, with his help!

**Marcus:** I don't need any help. We've got the farm and the stables. That's enough isn't it?

**Livia:** Of course, darling! We've done well to set this up. (*kisses him*).

**Marcus:** I suppose so, even though I'm supposed to be the famous ex-Gladiator and yet here I am, just growing olives. You're the wife, from a prosperous background and you're the one with the glamorous, manly career of breeding horses for the circus (*pours drinks*).

**Livia:** Are you suggesting that I'm making you look like a eunuch? It's hard work and you know it. Anyway, you set up the olive farm. I know nothing about olives. To me olives are just....olives.

**Marcus:** Ah but that's the point, olives are not just olives. The olives I grow are of a much sought after variety.

**Livia:** And so is the olive grower! (*LIVIA gets up and sits on MARCUS'S lap and strokes his hair*). A very much sought after variety! (*strokes his arm*) Full bodied (*nibbles his neck*) Tasty (*LIVIA straddles MARCUS and strokes his cheeks*) with a hard .....

**Marcus:** – Hmmm. (*strokes LIVIA'S hair*) I suppose this little horse breeder could be described as a choice pedigree breeding animal herself; (*puts his hands round LIVIA'S waist*) fine hips (*opens LIVIA'S mouth*) good teeth; and very well developed, fertile ....(*starts to slide hands round LIVIA'S sides*).

**Livia:** Marcus! (*LIVIA gets up and hits MARCUS playfully with a cushion*).

**Marcus:** (*MARCUS to defend himself*) But this animal clearly needs breaking in (*Marcus gets up and is chased around by LIVIA*) and teaching who is her master!

**Livia:** This animal is going to teach her master a lesson!

(*LIVIA tries to hit MARCUS with a cushion but MARCUS ducks; he hits LIVIA with a cushion then ducks again whilst LIVIA prepares for another shot. Enter PULCHERIA, looking very grand. She is hit by a cushion thrown by LIVIA.*)

**Livia:** Oh, Hi Mum!

**Pulcheria:** Really, Livia! I've spent six hours having my hair made up; I don't want it re-styling already.

(*enter GALLUS*)

**Gallus:** Have we interrupted something?

**Marcus:** Not exactly. (*LIVIA throws a cushion at MARCUS*) Just pillow talk.

**Pulcheria:** We've only been gone three hours ....

**Livia:** We didn't expect you back so soon.

**Pulcheria:** Evidently.

**Gallus:** And you don't throw cushions around in the house like that!

**Livia:** Sorry, father.

**Gallus:** You throw a cushion like this! (*GALLUS picks up a cushion and throws it in LIVIA'S face. LIVIA picks up a cushion and throws it at GALLUS and it hits PULCHERIA, as GALLUS ducks.*) Army training eh, Marcus? (*MARKUS picks up another cushion and hits LIVIA with it.*)

**Marcus:** Yes, army training, Gallus. (*LIVIA throws a cushion, hitting GALLUS and manages to land another cushion in MARCUS'S face.*)

**Livia:** Or just natural skill, as the case may be! (*claps her hands in satisfaction*)

**Pulcheria:** GALLUS! Stop encouraging them.

**Gallus:** Yes, well, er... Was there much interest from Proculus?

**Livia:** Yes, probably two chariot teams.

**Gallus:** Good! And the farm's going all right?

**Marcus:** I'm making progress.

**Gallus:** Excellent. I've heard that things were starting to develop. You're finding good markets for your produce?

**Marcus:** I certainly am.

**Pulcheria:** Yes, but there is more to life than business.

**Marcus:** I don't think I'm ready to look for any public office yet.

**Gallus:** Quite right! You enjoy your freedom, my boy. Public office isn't all it's cracked up to be.

**Pulcheria:** Yes but there are other things.

**Livia:** Meaning?

**Pulcheria:** Well, now that you have a nice sized house with a garden.....

**Livia:** Mother, you were on at me for years to get married. Now that I've done that, you're still not satisfied and you want me to start a family.

**Pulcheria:** Well, all I meant was...

**Gallus:** You can't push Livia my dear.

**Livia:** It's me she wants to see doing the pushing!

**Pulcheria:** Livia! There is no need to be.....coarse.

**Marcus:** Er...if you'll excuse me, I'd better get ready for a visitor. Someone coming over from the city!

**Gallus:** From Rome? I knew you'd get on. Army training you know; it develops self-reliance and initiative. Would I know him?

**Marcus:** I don't think so. I'm not quite sure how he heard about me. He particularly asked to meet me at this house, obviously knowing that you are my father in law.

**Pulcheria:** That does sound rather presumptuous!

**Gallus:** Still, he must be serious.

**Livia:** Buyers often like to get to know you socially before entering into a long-term association, don't they?

**Marcus:** Yeah, and this could mean regular business. He has the catering contract for the temple of Vesta!

**Gallus:** I see. Selling Virgin Olives to the Vestal Virgins!

**Marcus:** You could say that. Well, there wouldn't be much point trying to sell them aphrodisiacs, would there? Oh but I don't know though... (*PULCHERIA looks unimpressed but LIVIA is amused*).

**Pulcheria:** Not unless you wanted a visit from the temple priests!!

**Livia:** But wouldn't it be fun to cause a rumpus in the temple of Vesta! Imagine all those chaste girls going wild and dragging in men off the street.

**Gallus:** Livia; you've got away with a lot but one of these days.....

**Livia:** I'd like to see the faces of the temple priests! (*all laugh*)

**Marcus:** So where have you two just been out to, then? Shopping?

**Gallus:** Well, no. We've just been to visit Gracchus about some Council matters.

**Pulcheria:** And?

**Gallus:** And what dear?

**Pulcheria:** Oh really, Gallus! It seems that your father is going to be appointed as a Consul after his term as Magistrate is concluded. (*LIVIA embraces GALLUS*).

**Marcus:** Well done! Congratulations. (*they clasp arms*)

**Gallus:** Thank you Marcus. It will only mean more responsibilities; I'm sure.

**Livia:** And you're on your way now to see Paula, the dressmaker?

**Pulcheria:** Well actually, yes. How did you guess?

**Livia:** Because that's what you always do every time father has an advancement! So you can show off your new clothes at your next Ladies Luncheon.

**Gallus:** She does have a point!

**Pulcheria:** A good wife should support her husband.

**Livia:** But that doesn't mean supporting the entire local clothing and jewellery industries as well!

**Pulcheria:** You want me to look the part as well don't you?

**Gallus:** Of course dear.....if it makes you happy.

**Marcus:** I don't have that problem do I?