

# A BATTLE FOR THE GODS

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The mood is tense. All attention has fallen off Artemus, a spartan soldier, son of Hermes. As the crowd turn in unison toward the opening in the opposite side of the arena, waiting for King Achilles to call out the feared opponent's name. A cool breeze flows through the arena as the sun sits comfortably behind the Mount Olympus, not only is the arena full today with people, but even the Gods are watching from up above the high peak. Zeus, Hera and Poseidon gaze from the tall mountain peak.

As the gates behind Artemus shut, a peasant behind it, whispers Artemus' name. Instead of turning, Artemus just slowly steps backward to the gate. The peasant whispers, "Does thy have anything he'd like for me to tell thy's family."

Slight confusion and anger strike across Artemus.

"Excuse me?" he sternly asks.

"The male you are fighting is a god and has never left this great arena without gaining a killing for every male mortal he fights," explains the peasant, hundreds of times more nervous than Artemus.

"Who is he?" grunts the Sparta.

"Some say he's the living embodiment of **death**! Wherever he travels, night follows. It could be the middle of the hottest summer's day, and it'll fall to night in an instant because **he** is arriving. Wherever he goes, the dry hot winds of the underworld follow, and all candles are blown out as fast as you can snap your fingers. Even the great blinding light of Olympus is powerless to the ferocious fires of the undead flaming chariot of **death itself**. Some say the last memory his opponents see is the eyes of the forsaken once God turned gladiator, rumours have it that in his eyes, they can see the souls of the men he killed. That's what finishes some of them off. Seeing what death looks like on the inside! He doesn't fight for what any mortal man would fight for, not land, not power, but for the satisfaction of dragging a soul back to the depths of the underworld, hoping to bring enough souls to impress Lord Hades himself and regain his title of a God."

But it's not the underworld where Artemus wants to spend his eternity, it's Elysium, and Elysium is where the Gods shall grant him if he kills this ungodly monster.

"What's his name?" asks Artemus, not at all phased by the peasant's words.

"He goes by many different names. Most are too afraid to give such an un-god-like specimen a name. But there are a few. The black death is a popular one, some would go as far as to call him the son of Hades, the god of death. But it wouldn't suite. He isn't the god of death, he **is death**. So, I prefer the name Thanatos."

"Thanatos?"

"Yes, the living embodiment of death."

The Sparta smiles, as he eyes down the opening of the Arena. He looks to Mount Olympus above and quietly chants a prayer to the gods before nodding to the godlike statue of Athena.

*"The mind of Zeus,*

*The hand of Hercules,*

*The health of Apollo,*

*And the bloodlust of Ares,*

*Give me all the strengths of the gods,*

*As I give my life for you"* Artemus whispers, it was his Spartan code and hadn't failed him yet.

"Listen to me boy. Wherever he goes, **death follows.**"

Dark clouds suddenly cover up the sky, swallowing the sun and sending a cold shiver throughout the arena. Artemus takes a deep breath in, filling his lungs up of the hot, dry air and exhales a dry sand partial. The crowd eagerly, but silently await the arrival of Thanatos. The Sparta puts on his gold, red phoenix feathered helmet, tightens his shield, and holds his spear steady by his side.

Artemis looks around his possible grave. He sees nothing but the sand and dirt ground he stands on, and a few weapons stuck in the bodies of the fallen slaves. Artemis is a Sparta and has been trained since the early age of seven to be the best soldier in all the Greek lands. His old teacher told him, by the time he becomes full Spartan, he'll be able to kill a God. An exaggeration, obviously, but Artemis prays this is true.

He was thought not to fear, not to feel emotion, and to die in battle with pride and honour for the Gods.

A soft sound of a rattles chain edges closer and closer to the opening. From the Sparta's point of view, the opening opposite him is pitch black, but suddenly becomes lighter and lighter as the Monster Thanatos limps toward the daylight.

After what felt like hours to the crowd, Thanatos reveals himself. A ten-foot tall, flaming horror of a false god. His peasant clothes nearly completely burned off and mainly armour melted into him protecting his Malton magma skin. His hands the size of watermelons, he wields a sword forged from the silver horns of a minotaur, his

helmet made from the teeth of Cerberus, the three headed dog, and his shield weaved from the scale skin of Medusa herself. He was a horrific sight to see, how could such a horrifying creature be created. No wonder it was a god of the underworld.

The crowd lets out a cracking belt of a roar upon witnessing Thanatos. The fact that he is such a horrific creature doesn't bother the crowd, they just want to see him rip the Sparta apart and to douse himself in his blood. The gates behind Thanatos shut, and the crowd quiet down as they wait for either fighter to strike.

Thanatos looks Artemis dead in the eye and tilts his head, as if to say, "Come to me." But the Sparta does not, he stands his ground. He plants both feet firmly into the dirt. Thanatos seems confused about how fearless the Sparta seems. Thanatos grows impatient and begins to charge toward Artemus. The ground rattles with each massive footstep Thanatos takes. But Artemus still stands strong, without moving. Thanatos edges closer and closer until his entire body blocks out all vision in front of Artemus. The crowd gasp as they fear what will happen to Artemus. While running, Thanatos takes his sword out of its hilt on his hip and swings it above his head, a strip of fire ignites from his arm, traveling to the blade of his sword.

Although Thanatos is running, Artemus can see that he is a slow mover. In Artemus' mind, he figures his plan of action. He will use Thanatos' slow moving and counter it with the sleek agility of a smaller man. Upon reaching just a few feet from Artemus, Thanatos thrusts his sword from his head downward toward the top of the Sparta's head, hopefully splitting him into two even slices. But to the crowd's surprise, The Sparta rolls out of the swords range and behind Thanatos. The Sparta sticks his spear into the ground and pulls out a large knife from his ankle and slashes it multiple times, sticking it between two bits of rock-hard magma and popping one of them off.

This extremely hurts Thanatos, and he sends his hand to the ankle to comfort it. This is part of Artemus' plan and takes another knife from his other ankle and uses them as picks as he begins to climb the arm of the mountain Thanatos. He quickly reaches the summit of the beast and stands on both shoulders, but not taking a moments rest as he leaps into the air, holding both knives above his head, about to implant them into the skull of Thanatos. But Thanatos foils Artemus' plan and grabs the Sparta by the neck. With his massively sizes hands he tried to grip Artemus' head to crush it with ease, just as he is about to crush the Sparta's head, Artemus slices one of his fingers off. A finger the size of a regular mortal hand falls to the floor and instantaneously disintegrates.

Thanatos instead throws Artemus across the arena. Artemus flies across it with great speed, but cushions his landing by hiding behind his shield. The crowd finally cheers, as it seems Thanatos has defeated the Sparta. But Artemus defies their expectations and gets up. Artemus is dazed but gets on with it as he is in the heat of battle. Both warriors take out their swords and charge towards each other, roaring like madmen.

Both warriors crash into each other and begin to sword fight. Thanatos swings many hard shots as Artemus defends. He doesn't take any shots, but instead deflects them by using Thanatos' weight against him. Even with the Sparta's beautifully forged armour, any good swing by the Ex-God would completely slice him into two, so he makes sure they all lightly brush off either his sword or his shield.

Artemus deflects seven or eight shots before striking swift and hard with his sword. A sword made from the highest quality of silver in all the Greek lands, stronger than any other sword any mortal man should wield. A blow straight into Thanatos's neck should surely kill him, but to the surprise of Artemus and the crowd, upon stabbing him in the neck, the sword breaks. Shattering into a million pieces on the floor.

Thanatos smiles, and for the first time in his whole life, Artemus is scared. A sudden rush of fear poisons his blood, and his skin burns by being this close to the lava on Thanatos.

Thanatos swings his sword and out of fear, Artemus blocks with his shield. Sending Artemus halfway across the arena again, just this time, his shield is now broken into two and his helmet is cracked into two upon crashing into the wall. Artemus takes a moment to himself to breath. This would usually be the moment when any man would give in and stay on the floor, while Thanatos slowly edges closer and closer to finish them off. But Artemus is no man, he is Sparta.

The crowd chant what could only be called "a death chant" as Thanatos edges closer to Artemus, the crowd swaying to him to kill Artemus.

But to everyone's surprise, Artemus gets off the floor, takes his helmet off, tightens his shield and picks up his spear he left earlier. Thanatos is shocked and the crowd takes a loud gasp. Artemus then looks to the clouded Mount Olympus and shouts

"Gods above, give me the power to kill this monster. I pledge my allegiance to you!!"

Suddenly, the clouds rush away and the Summit of Mount Olympus shines in the sunlight. The crowd is absolutely shocked - Artemus just made contact with the Gods, and they heard him. A lightning bolt strikes down from Zeus' throne and strikes Artemus. The crowd are silent, and Thanatos is stunned. The bolt doesn't seem to be affecting Artemus, no, it seems as that Artemus is absorbing it.

While the crowd lay in awe of what they're seeing, Artemus is getting a message. He hears the great lightning God Zeus himself speaking to him.

"I grand you the power of the Gods, and in return, your life."

After absorbing the power of the gods, Artemus stands his ground and again aims his spear directly between the eyes of Thanatos, except this time he doesn't back down. He throws the spear, with the strength of Hercules. The spear travels faster than Hermes, the God of speed. The spear lands right in the eye of Thanatos and even completely through the back of his skull, even breaking through the stone wall behind him. A wave of souls come swarming out of the eye of Thanatos, all screaming, and squinting at the

brightness of the sun. After what seems like hundreds of souls worming out of the empty eye socket. Thanatos re-stands his ground and both warriors charge at each other again. Artemus jumps high enough to reach Thanatos' face and sends him crashing into the wall. Artemus sprints over the Thanatos who's leaning against the wall. Artemus sends him a flurry of punches, to both his head and body, blood, lava, and souls spewing everywhere. Thanatos falls to the ground with only his hand holding him up. Artemus kicks his hand off the floor and knees Thanatos in the face, sending him crashing into the wall.”

Artemus then beats Thanatos on the ground. His hands covered in lightening and the sizzling blood of Thanatos. Artemus then stands up from Thanatos, beat to a pulp and walks towards Thanatos' flaming sword. Upon picking up the massive god-like sword, it ignites both fire and electricity. The crowd go silent as they wait for Artemus to kill him. Artemus slowly walks to Thanatos, looking him dead in the eye and stands over him. Pointing the sword downward above his head, Artemus stabs Thanatos in the heart and twists the sword slightly ensuring the kill.

The crowd go crazy and cheer at the man who killed a god, “The God killer” they chant, as Artemus stands and walks away from the body of a once God. The lightning orbs and bolts surrounding Artemus slowly fade away, as he goes from feeling like a God, to returning to a mortal man, where right now he is dying from his injuries from the battle. Artemus looks up at Mount Olympus and drops to his knees. He looks up, his shield in his hand and thanks the Gods. He then drops to the floor, dead, to feast with the fallen Gods in Elysium.