



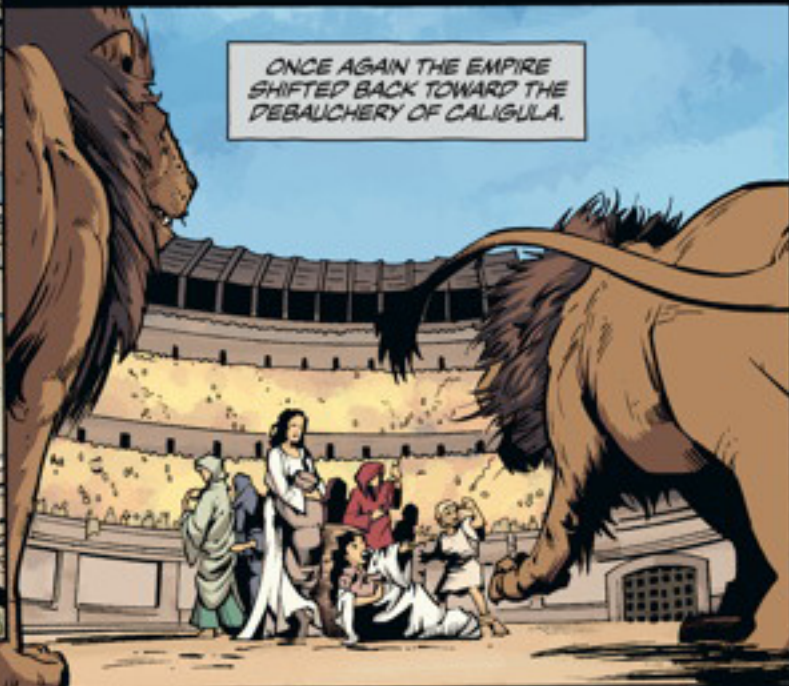
I COULD NOT ESCAPE THE FEELING THAT SHE WAS CONCEALING SOMETHING FROM ME.

SHE WAS AFRAID.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED WAS THIS--



CLAUDIUS WAS DEAD AND HIS GRANDNEPHEW, NERO, HAD BECOME EMPEROR OF ROME.

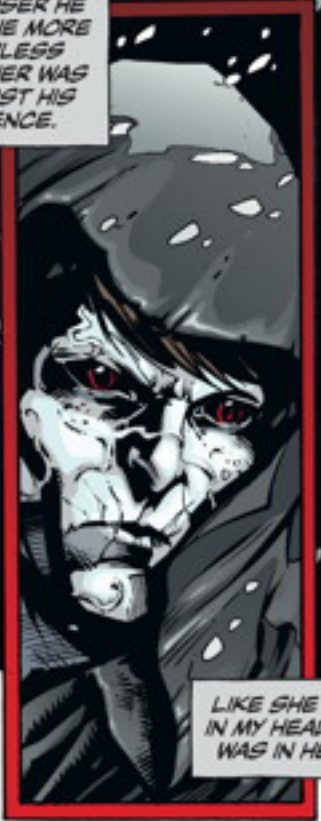


ONCE AGAIN THE EMPIRE SHIFTED BACK TOWARD THE DEBAUCHERY OF CALIGULA.



THRAX CAME SOUTH ONCE AGAIN, TO TAKE UP THE PURSUIT OF MY MOTHER AND FIND OUT WHAT BECAME OF ME.

THE CLOSER HE CAME, THE MORE POWERLESS MY MOTHER WAS TO RESIST HIS INFLUENCE.



LIKE SHE WAS IN MY HEAD, HE WAS IN HERS.

WHICH IS WHY SHE BADE ME GO.

BUT MY LINEAGE MADE ME RISK MOVEMENT DURING THE DAY, SO I COULD HASTEN MY RETURN.

I KNEW IMMEDIATELY SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

AND BEFORE THE SUN SET ON THE NEXT DAY, I WAS BACK.

SON!



MOTHER?

THRAX, I KNEW IMMEDIATELY THIS WAS THE CREATURE THAT INFECTED MY MOTHER. I COULD SENSE ITS POWER.

KSSSSSS

ITS MALEVOLENT INTELLIGENCE.