

D U F A U X - D E L A B Y

MURENA

BOOK V

THE BLACK GODDESS



euRoPe
COMICS

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V

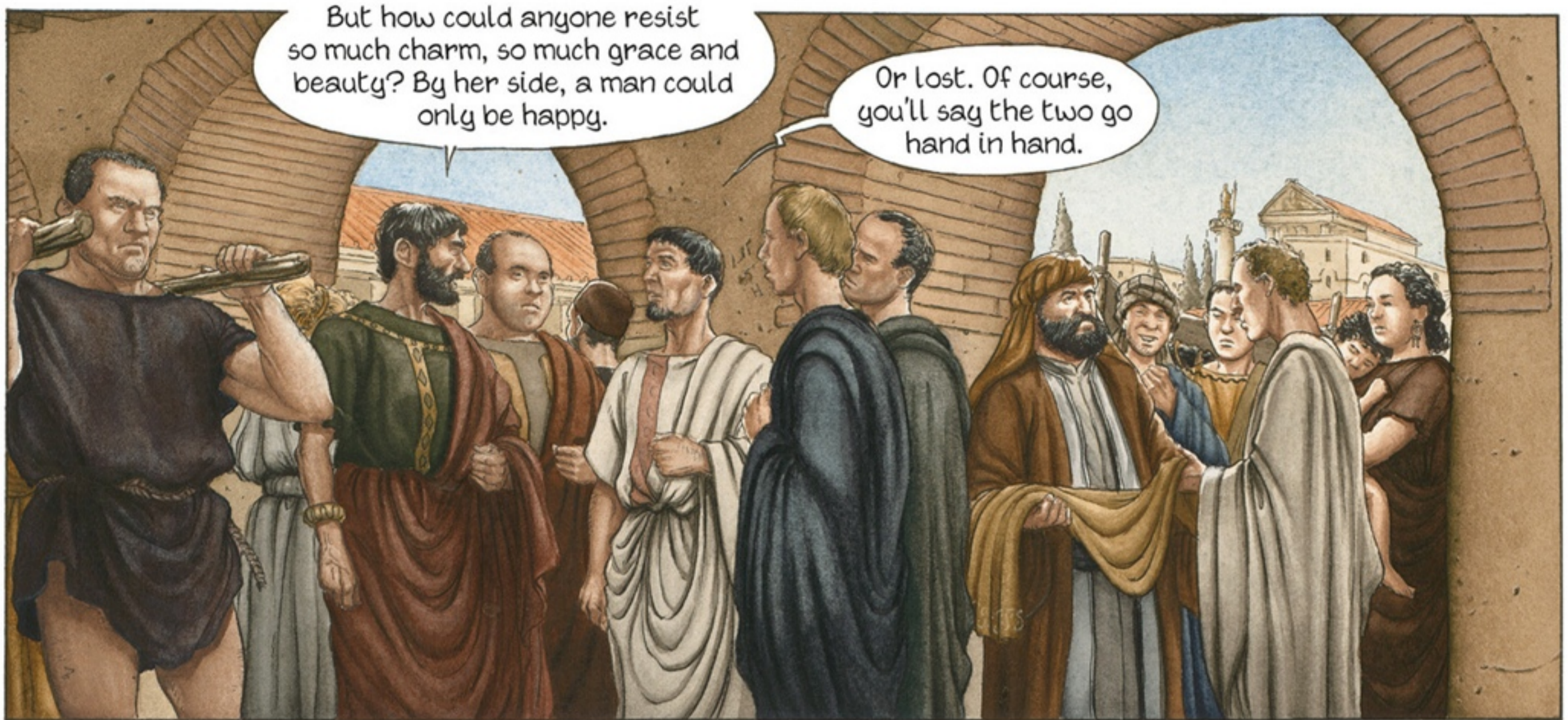
THE BLACK GODDESS

COLORIST
Jérémy Petiqueux



Rome. Spring, 62 AD. The city is abuzz with talk of the death of Burrhus, former prefect of the Praetorian Guard, an influential member of the imperial government. He was the only one, besides Seneca, to have some influence on young Nero, who mourns his passing. But is his sorrow real? Burrhus was not liked by Poppaea, Caesar's new favorite, whose star is rising—a dark star of ill omen...





But how could anyone resist so much charm, so much grace and beauty? By her side, a man could only be happy.

Or lost. Of course, you'll say the two go hand in hand.



But what's become of Acte, the former favorite? We no longer see her at court.

Speaking of—there she is! And alone, unescorted.



One day the world is at your feet; the next, nothing—just footprints in the dust.



ACTE!



Lucius Murena!

I thought it was you! How wonderful to see you!



What's this? All alone? Is there no one escorting you?

I—I've left the palace. You haven't heard?



Poppaea... did she banish you?

No. She ignores me, but she seems to bear me no ill will.



Ill will for what? For loving the Emperor? For supporting him while he was battling his own mother's intrigues?

That's all in the past, Lucius. True, I love...



...I used to love...



...Nero, but I'm of no use to him anymore. He needs a strong woman at his side, one who won't bring him shame. No one can forget where I came from.



Not even you, Lucius.

Your love for Caesar has ennobled you, Acte. You will never be who you were before.



A prostitute?⁽¹⁾ I quite like prostitutes, myself. Their arts save us from the boredom and incredible coldness of our matrons.



There are no matrons at my house. My villa is yours, if you wish. You could brighten the lives of two poor bachelors with your dazzling beauty.

Thank you, but—



Please say yes.



He's all we ever hear about anymore. The Emperor has made him his champion. And he hasn't lost a battle since. The stakes are rising. The last bet on his head was for 20,000 sesterces!⁽²⁾

That's the yearly rental on my villa!

And what's this champion called?

Massam...



Tonight he's fighting at the house of Senator Sixtius' daughter. Don't bother trying to get in. All the seats are taken.



They say even Poppaea's going. She's looking for some entertainment. Nero's mourning over Burrhus' death seems to bore her to no end.



Gently, my handsome beast, gently! Your master wants to make the pleasure last.



Every drop of blood counts!



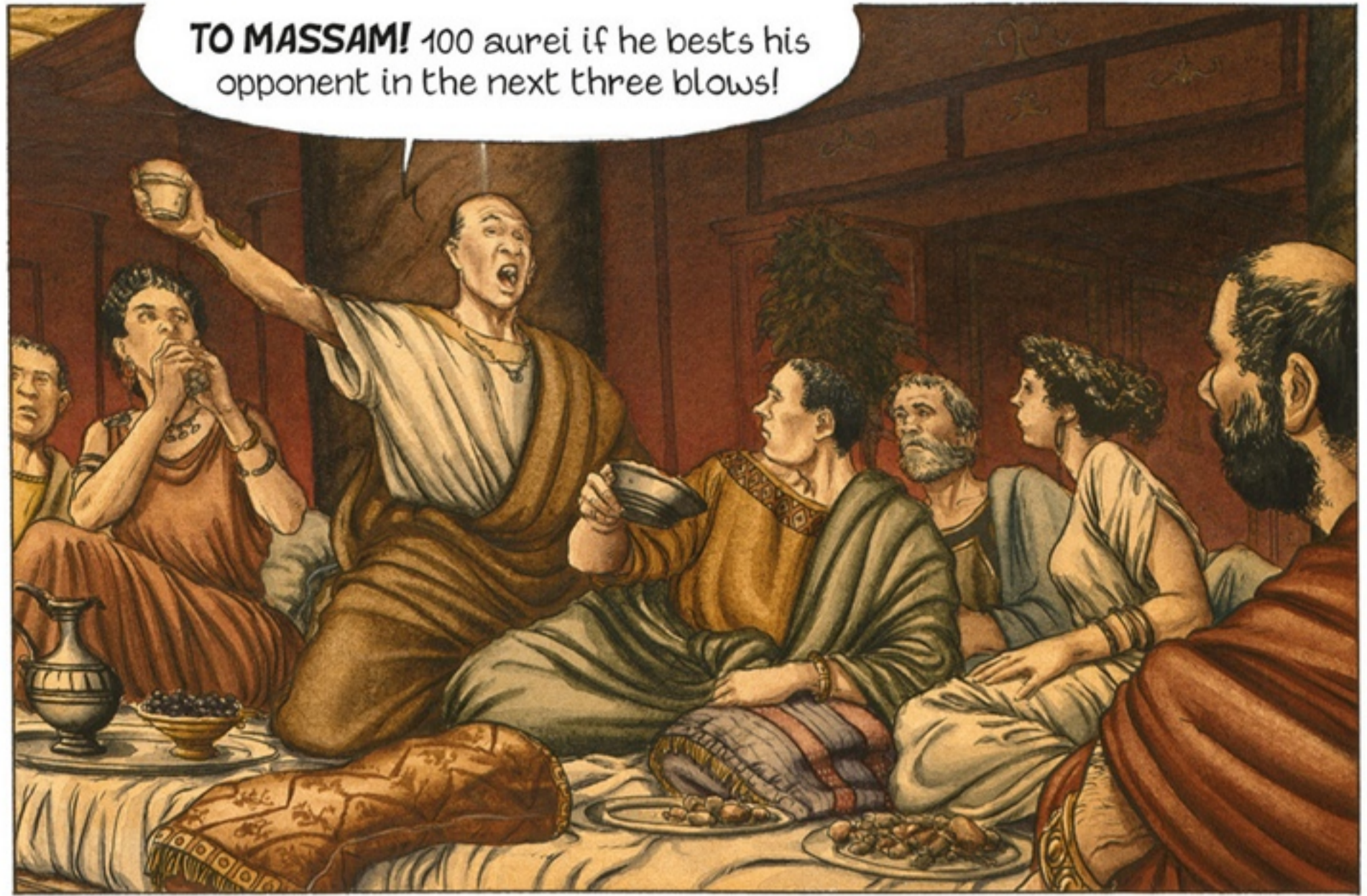
Mmm—slave blood! There's nothing finer! It reminds me of a grape that grows on the slopes of Etna. An earthy, full-bodied wine that leaves you thirsting for more!



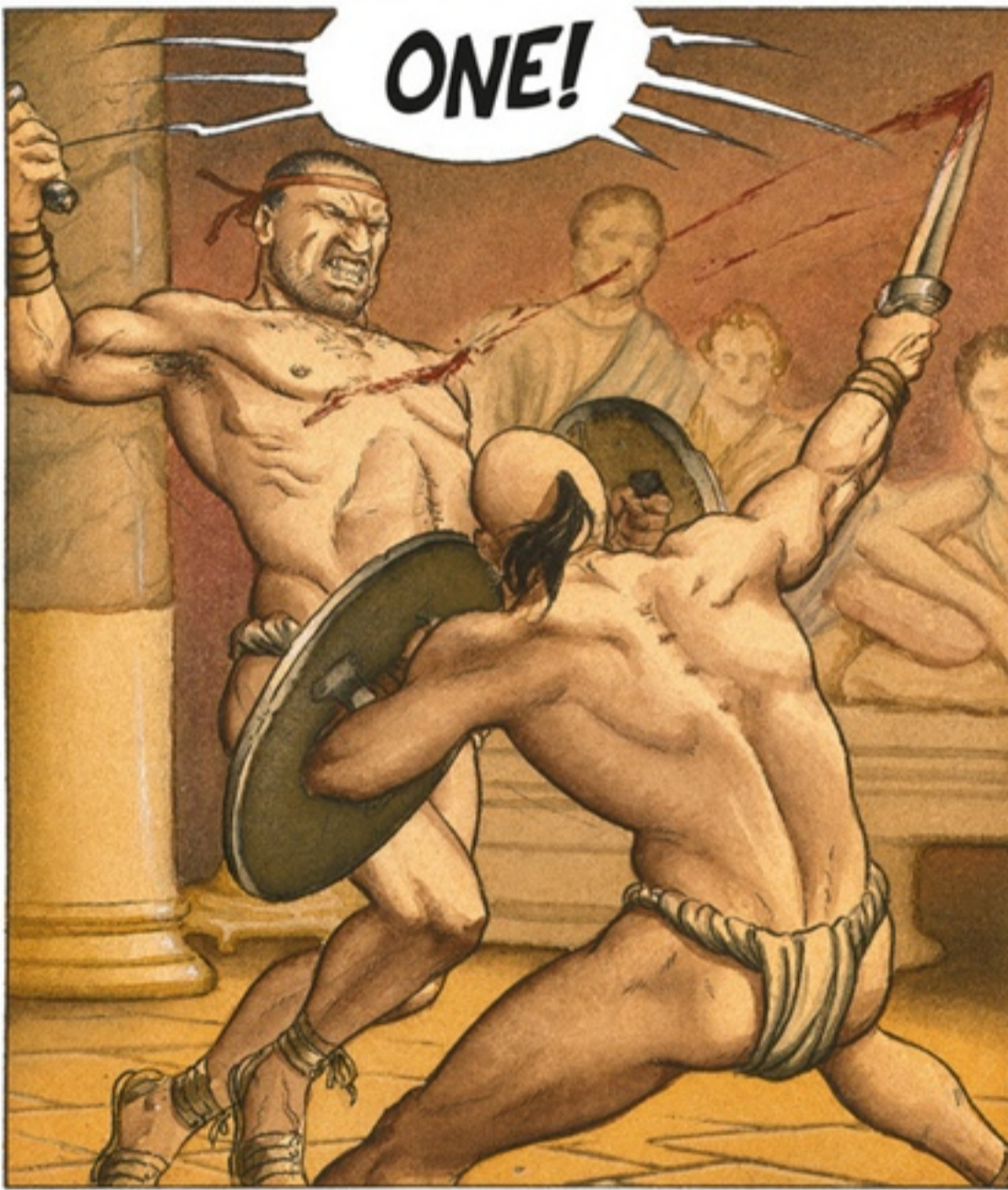
Drink, my friends! Drink!
Let not a drop of blood
remain in their veins!



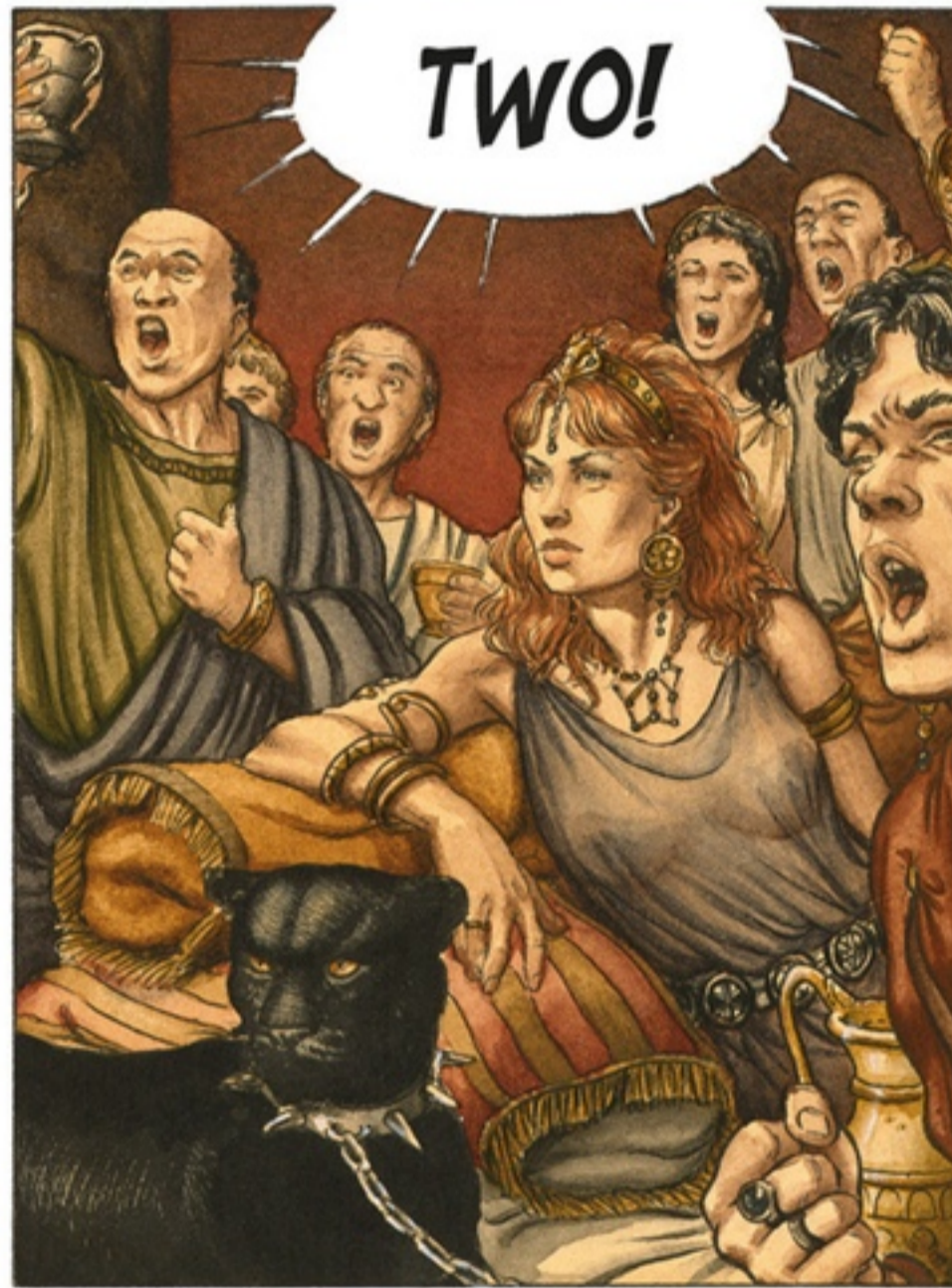
TO MASSAM! 100 aurei if he bests his
opponent in the next three blows!



ONE!



TWO!



THREE!



Excellent! Next time,
we'll shower him in a
fine layer of gold! He
deserves it!



M-
mercy!



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