

Empress Octavia

beckoning to his favorite Spiculus, whispers an order into his ear.

Spiculus vanishes, but soon reappears in the Cæsar's box and secretly thrusts a long strip of papyrus into the folds of his toga. The son scans his mother's features suspiciously to discover whether her penetration has detected the secret correspondence, and lets the strip of papyrus slip lightly through his hands — but not a word of writing is legible; the receiver of the letter must wait until he returns home and scatters charcoal upon the characters written with milk.¹ Not until then will they become visible in black outlines.

"Sly Sabina," murmurs the delighted Cæsar.

Meanwhile the crowd is murmuring, and the complaisant director of festivals, to whom its will is law, orders the gladiators to retire. The iron grating at the extreme end of the building rolls back, a huge form creeps from the dark cage, a short growl is followed by a deep roar that shakes the very air, and, directly after, the lion's tail lashes the sand of the arena. He, the terror of the caravans, was dragged in huge carts through the provinces of the Empire and now must extort the admiration of the populace by his fury. The people

¹ Ovid: *Ars Amandi*.