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The Spartacus War

Barry Strauss

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The Spartacus War is the extraordinary story of the most famous slave rebellion in the ancient world, the fascinating true story behind a legend that has been the inspiration for novelists, filmmakers, and revolutionaries for 2,000 years. Starting with only seventy-four men, a gladiator named Spartacus incited a rebellion that threatened Rome itself. With his fellow gladiators, Spartacus built an army of 60,000 soldiers and controlled the southern Italian countryside. A charismatic leader, he used religion to win support. An ex-soldier in the Roman army, Spartacus excelled in combat. He defeated nine Roman armies and kept Rome at bay for two years before he was defeated. After his final battle, 6,000 of his followers were captured and crucified along Rome's main southern highway.

The Spartacus War is the dramatic and factual account of one of history's great rebellions. Spartacus was beaten by a Roman general, Crassus, who had learned how to defeat an insurgency. But the rebels were partly to blame for their failure. Their army was large and often undisciplined; the many ethnic groups within it frequently quarreled over leadership. No single leader, not even Spartacus, could keep them all in line. And when faced with a choice between escaping to freedom and looting, the rebels chose wealth over liberty, risking an eventual confrontation with Rome's most powerful forces.

The result of years of research, *The Spartacus War* is based not only on written documents but also on archaeological evidence, historical reconstruction, and the author's extensive travels in the Italian countryside that Spartacus once conquered.

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