



The Gladiator

Carla Capshaw

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He won his fame—and his freedom—in the gory pits of Rome's Colosseum. Yet the greatest challenge for once-legendary gladiator Caros Viriathos comes to him through a slave. *His* slave, the beautiful and mysterious Pelonia Valeria. Her secret brings danger to his household but offers Caros a love like he's never known....

Should anyone learn she is a Christian, Pelonia will be executed. Her faith threatens not only herself, but her master. Can she convince a man who found fame through unforgiving brutality to show mercy? And when she's ultimately given the choice, will Pelonia choose freedom or the love of a gladiator?

The Gladiator Details

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From Reader Review The Gladiator for online ebook

Amanda Caldwell says

"You're in love with a Christian, but you've killed her kind. Now you're laboring with the question of how to win her affection without having to admit your guilt or share her faith."

First, let me say that at my job I sometimes do work for the Harlequin Reader Service. The company I work for is contracted through Harlequin. This is only the second Harlequin book I've read, usually I'm somewhat apprehensive about picking them up. I do fear they'll be cheesy, but I've been wanting to read more of the Harlequin books I have around, because I did enjoy the first one I read and second because I like to sound educated about the products I work with.

Judging from the two I've read, yes they can be sort of cheesy at times, but I think that's a trait found throughout Christian romances. Love Inspired is Harlequin's line of Christian romances. I did find The Gladiator to probably be one of the more unique titles. I heard great things about this one, so I found it on PaperBackSwap and now here I am writing a review of it.

The story starts off with the female lead, Pelonia, on her way to Rome for her cousin Tiberia's wedding. Things don't go as planned and she ends up captured and sold into slavery in the home and gladiatorial training school of Caros Viriathos. Pelonia is a Christian and at this point in history being Christian within the Roman Empire meant death. Many times Christians were executed in the arena with thousands of spectators cheering for their deaths. Caros, a former gladiator, finds himself drawn to the beautiful Pelonia's spirit. There's something different about her and he soon learns it's her faith. Pelonia and Caros share a mutual attraction, but Pelonia won't share her life with someone who doesn't share her faith.

I did enjoy this book, however I found it a bit boring at times. I really can't pinpoint what it was that was boring, but I'd find my mind wandering while reading it. That might say more about my own attention span rather than the actual story. Ancient Rome is not a point in history that particularly intrigues me, but I've only read a few books set during this time period and culture, so it was a unique setting to me personally. The closest I've probably read to this setting is Theodora: Actress, Emperess, Whore. At times while reading The Gladiator I was also reminded of the Starz show Spartacus. I felt the author really did a great job at portraying the grittiness of that empire and how twisted the lifestyles and dirty the society was, while still keeping the book clean and within Christian standards.

I personally, wouldn't have minded having an x-rated copy of this book. Maybe Harlequin has something similar in one of their more "adult" lines. Gladiator + slave = yes please. Slaves during these times were often used for more than just cleaning *ahem*. The only thing that would ruin it is that I wasn't a big fan of Caros. He is supposedly pretty hot, but his personality ruined it for me. He was sort of soft to me. Maybe because I did want to see a more rough and dominating male as the love interest. But then, I had to remind myself, "settle down this is a Christian romance..."

Anyhow, I'm giving The Gladiator 3 out of 5 stars. I think if you're new to Love Inspired Romances this would probably be a good place to start. From what I can tell on Goodreads it's probably one of the most popular in that entire line of romances.

Vicki says

I am so impressed that this is Ms. Capshaw's debut novel, and I hope for more to come!

I might have enjoyed this book in part because I am Christian and I thoroughly loved reading about Pelonia's faith and how she led Caros to Christ. God uses human beings to do just that, even at times when the believer is in the darkest trial of their own.

Caros was a slave, gladiator, rich man who had a kind and gentle heart, especially toward Pelonia. Pelonia was sold to Caros under a despicable situation. At first she questioned, "Why, Lord?" but then she realized that God had put her right there to be a witness to Caros. And witness she did!

The lesson of the book (the theme) is based on Romans 8:28, which the author stated in her "Dear Reader" after the end of the story. All Christians likely know this verse by heart: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Pelonia's trial, her darkest days, (view spoiler)

Recommendation: I think this book is really good and shows just how trusting in God and knowing that we (mortal humans) will never fully understand His ways but that we need to trust that He does what is His will for our eternal salvation. As a Christian I did love this book; however, if you don't want to hear about how God uses people in their darkest times to bring others to Him, you might not like this one.

*Side Note: My daughter is Christian and used to work in the county jail. She met a prisoner there and he was in his late 30's. He'd led a life of being in a gang. One day they were talking and she told him, "The only way for a person like you to change is to give your life to Christ." Well, long story short, he did just that. Now nearly three years later he's given up that lifestyle and he serves God. Witnessing can be done anywhere, under circumstances!

Tito says

Ever since I've read Francine River's Mark of the Lion series, I've had a really soft spot for books set in this era, and since it's so much like

I was really excited to read it. I can say for sure that while it was not exactly what I wanted, it did not disappoint. My only complaints would be that the writing was a bit juvenile, but I got into it later on. Secondly would be the fact that Caros (the main male lead) was wayyyy too nice to Pelonia, the main female character. Otherwise, the plot was great, and I felt that the secondary characters were really interesting to read about too. Warning: the book did get a bit preachy at times, but if you're able to ignore that, then keep on going. In conclusion, the book isn't really to be read to critically, and is instead a sweet story about finding redemption. I'm definitely going to be binge reading the next few books.

Overall rating: 4 stars

Megan says

I was excited to read this book. It engaged me quickly, and I love this time period and theme. The faith in the persecuted church, their strength and witness is inspiring. The church grew like wild fire because of that faith in the face of horrible trials and death. We live in an age where we have relative freedom of sharing Christ with others, and yet we hold back because of various small consequences. The believers of that day and age

literally faced swords, slavery, lions, and beasts before they would deny their Lord! WOW, we should be convicted by that.

Pelonia has lost everything but her life and her God; if it were known that she was one of "the deviants," they would take her life as well. As it stands, she is a slave to the infamous Caros Viriathos, head of the gladiator training school and x-gladiator himself. When he first sees her, he is drawn to her instantly. He buys her from the slave trader, hoping to win her heart. She also feels for him, but vows she will not be a slave forever. He wants only to keep her near, while she wants her freedom.

It was a good story, an engaging and quick read. I had trouble reconciling some of the dialogue and actions to the characters and situations. Some of the things they said and did, or even thought did not seem believable; because of this, at times the romance felt forced. A slave and her master falling in love is tenuous ground and can be very exciting and emotional; however, I would have liked to see more justification to their growing feelings. That being said, the plot moved quickly. I loved the strong testimony of the Christian characters. There is a second one planned, and I would like to find out how the story progresses with the secondary characters. This is Capshaw's first novel, and I would imagine her next one will be even better.

Michelle says

More like 4.75 stars

Carla Capshaw knows how to write a breath-stealing romance. She adds just the right amount of bait on the line to reel fans of romantic historical fiction in to her tale of inspired love. Fans of *The Mark of the Lion* series by Francine Rivers will enjoy this book. While this story had to be a tad kinder and gentler due to the Love Inspired label, I still found it to be edgy enough to be enjoyable.

Caros was one hot hero. His restrained desire for the heroine made him very heroic and would win the heart of any romance lover. The nice twist on this story that differs from secular fiction was that one of the things that attracted Caros to Pelonia, the heroine, was her love for Jesus and her unshakable faith. It wasn't just her unspoiled status because she was a virgin. While that attracted him at first, it wasn't what won his heart. His initial instinct was to conquer her heart, and he tried many effective tactics, however, it wasn't until his heart was conquered through her love and different perspective on life that things turned around for him. That made for a great story.

I had a hard time putting this story down. While there wasn't as much kissing as I often enjoy in a story, there was plenty of romantic tension and genuine caring between them that in some ways it made the story more compelling. Now in reality some of the parts of this story would probably never have happened in real life, but because it was so well done I was willing to suspend a little reality for the sake of this beautiful story. I highly recommend it and am looking forward to reading *The Protector*, which includes characters from this story. I could tell there would be a book tie in from the little bit I read about the other impossible love match. Once I like an author I tend to want to read all of their other books.

TJ says

4.5/5.0

A perfect example that *really* good books can come in small (and serial) packages! Having a knowledgeable understanding of the basics in Roman history yet shying away from any "entertainment" reading centered in

the brutal time, I was delightfully amazed at how deftly Ms. Capshaw wove the horrendous historical realism into a beautiful love story.

The worlds of a slave-turned gladiator-turned wealthy trainer and a wealthy Christian girl-turned slave are such polar opposites that the plot is intrinsically woven with tension and drama while educating the reader. I closed the book with a much deeper understanding of the emotions, trials, horrors, and ultimately the deep humanity that will always shine, even in some of the worst of this world's history.

Scribs says

Okay, okay. I know this book looks like just another bodice-ripping, formulaic romance. I'm still a little shocked that I read it at all. But after finishing it, I'm a little surprised to see it categorized simply as romance, and that it has a cover that does little to represent the story. In fact, our hero was hardly physically described at all (refreshing).

Pelonia is the daughter of a rich land owner just outside Rome. While on her way to her cousin's wedding, her father and entire family are killed, with the exception of her uncle. After burying her father, her uncle sells her into slavery to a passing caravan.

Caros, a former gladiator who won his freedom, buys Pelonia from the caravan for a ridiculous price because he does not want to see her sold to a brothel. Of course, as you can guess, Pelonia's fiesty and surprising behavior draws Caros to her. I was pleasantly surprised by the uniqueness of her character.

Now, this book is NOT just about the two of them. Its actually about Christianity. Surprised? If discovered, Pelonia (as a Christian) will be thrown to the lions in the arena. She is still devoted to her faith and shows an admirable dedication which is part of what makes her so interesting. What would you do, if you had but to deny your faith in order to avoid the arena? Capshaw raises interesting questions that made this book much more than a romance.

Okay, admiration of plot aside, the writing was barely tolerable. She did so much emotion naming, I could hardly stand it. BUT since the story was good, I waded through it. And I'd recommend it.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

This was a beautiful book. I have long been wishing to read a Christian romance that delivered such a rich story as this. I loved how the love story was full, and it was as much about the love between Pelonia and Caros, as it was also Pelonia's love for Christ, and how she was able to come into Caros' life and to help him to heal and to come to know Christ. Ms. Capshaw did such a great job of showing this without it being preachy. The message of God's love and how it gave Pelonia strength and how it could heal Caros' deep emotional wounds was rich. The narrative never came off as pedantic or filled with spiritual public service announcements. It truly was about people of faith living their lives. There weren't any easy answers. Pelonia had a struggle sometimes to act true to her faith, putting her faith in God to help her and to be her strength, which is the experience of all Christians. She didn't realize that her actions showed the truth of her message. Caros saw how her faith was her foundation, how it gave her peace, and he came to want to know her God, who had made her such a beautiful, peace-filled person.

Caros had the traits that I love in a good hero: he was strong, but gentle, loving, possessive. He was very

masculine, and he was a good man, even if he had lived a rough life, and done things he couldn't forgive himself for. I could easily see why Pelonia fell in love with him. I could also see how the Lord had brought those two together.

I also liked the developing secondary romance between Quintus, a slave who is being trained as a gladiator by Caros, and Adiona, Caros' seemingly hardened widow friend. In a way, she is like a male version of Caros. She seems hard and cruel, but down deep, she hides wounds that keep her from living a full life. I have a feeling that Quintus will bring love into her life.

The setting of this book took me back to Rome in the period of the early Christian church. It was very disheartening to see how Christians were treated, murdered for their faith and called deviants. It called me to stand strong in my own faith, considering that people were martyred by the thousands back then (and still are in parts of the world). The least of my worries is facing humiliation or being scorned by people because I believe in Jesus.

I really want to thank Ms. Capshaw for writing this book. She ministered to me so fruitfully. I needed the lessons in this book, as they strengthened my faith, but also took my mind off my own troubles. It was a good lesson that you are never beyond God's grace, and God has a plan that he will see through. It may not make sense, but His will can't help but be done; and you are a part of His plan in whatever way that is unique to you, because you are precious to God. Ms. Capshaw did a better job of showing this message than I can in this review, and I'm glad of that. I am so happy I had the chance to read *The Gladiator*, and I look forward to reading more of her books. If someone asks for a recommendation for a good Christian romance to read, or a romance that is just plain fulfilling for any romance or historical fiction reader, I'd be happy to recommend this one.

Ashlyn says

[that it didn't matter if Pelonia was his wife or slave, he w

Maria Gad says

It's 81 A.C.

Pelonia has just lost everything she has, except her soul and her faith. Being betrayed, she was to be a slave to caros, a great gladiator trainer. Quickly, caros is drawn to her beautiful spirit, a girl who hasn't alike. Caros comes to think about the reasons that make her endure all this pain and betrayal, the reasons of her unconditional forgiveness to whom hated her the most . she is peaceful and owns a heart of gold, and that's exactly what he needs a long time ago. She is so brave to hold strong to her faith in time when Christians were fed to lions. Unfortunately, there is one obstacle, she is christian and he doesn't believe in god. Maybe most importantly, he doesn't believe that god will forgive all his crimes because no one did. I don't prefer to call this book a christian book, I would rather assume it's how anyone comes to know god, regardless of any religion.

The main theme of the book is based on the bible verse (Roman 8:28) "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose." .

A very well written book with a good romantic story. However, it was preachy, some parts were so unbelievable, how comes a good gladiator be very soft especially of the beginning of the relationship.

Pelonia's knowledge of Christianity was very shallow, I expected her words to have more deepness, to have something powerful to get Caros to know god.

Jennifer says

The Gladiator captures your attention right from the first page. I must admit that I couldn't put it down. I love the story of Pelonia and Caros. Pelonia and Caros both learn lessons the hard way. Pelonia learns to strengthen her faith in God even during difficult times. It is her light and love for Christ that Caros sees in her, and that is the reason that he is drawn to her. He wants peace and he sees it among her and another slave he had bought for the Gladiator ring. It is through these two witnesses, that He learns to depends on God and find the forgiveness and peace that he has sought for a long time. The history of the Romans throwing Christians in to the ring is sad, but it's amazing to see such faith among believers. I'm not sure some of us today who sit in our comfortable pews in church would be that brave and strong. If we were faced with the question Pelonia was, would we give into the temptation to deny christ to save our life, or would we trust in God, like Pelonia did. She had her choice to chose, but she never denied her Christ. Oh! And, I must say Cat is the greatest! I want a pet Tiger now. But, overall the book gives readers a glimpses into Rome during hard times for Christians and challenges the faith of us all. But as the Author states at the end, Romans 8:28 was her main intent in the book and I think she achieved it.

Josephine (Jo) says

Well, this was quite a change for me! The story is set in ancient Rome at the time when Christians were being persecuted for their faith. When beautiful young Pelonia is sold into slavery and bought by the ex-gladiator Caros she is terrified for her future safety. Pelonia has only her faith to keep her from despair but unexpectedly Caros is not the monster that his reputation makes him out to be. The relationship between the couple seems to be impossible and when the authorities hear that Pelonia is a Christian she is in terrible danger. Can she survive the horror of the arena!

This was not my usual sort of read, it is an unashamed romance. I did however enjoy it. I liked the setting of ancient Rome and the Christian element. The story was romantic and wholesome.

Marlene Cabrera says

It has been a long time since I have read a book that has captured my full attention, such as this one. From the first page I had a deep hunger too continue and to unravel the many misteries hidden in each page. I believe this book to be a wonderful masterpiece that deserves high praise. I shall wait with utter excitement for Carla Capshaw's next book, and I assure you I shall be first in line once it is released.

P.S. I would also love to thank Carla Capshaw for sending me the copy of The Gladiator I won in a Goodreads giveaway! Thank You!

J. says

I was blessed to get an advance copy of Carla Capshaw's November release, The Gladiator. I can say without a doubt it is one of the most compelling, faith-full, romantic Love Inspireds I have ever read. Make that

inspirational novels period.

The story of a slave girl and an former gladiator, this wonderful read is definitely not the same old characters, same old setting. The Gladiator is also no sugarcoated historical novel but a true page turner which transports the reader back to the times when being a Christian was dangerous and just being a woman was fraught with peril.

A scarred, tormented hero like few I have found (regardless of the romance subgenre), a more than spunky heroine, lovely detailing, intense romance, and a clear direct faith message, are just a few of the reasons I urge you to get this book.

Get it now from eharlequin.com or wait until it shows up on the shelves...but whatever you do, get this book.

Peace, Julie

Kathy says

I won a copy of this book from goodreads giveaways.

This book is a Love Inspired Historical. For anyone not familiar with the Love Inspired Historicals they are Christian romance books and thus contains all the content typical of this genre...Very clean with Christian faith, doctrine and beliefs interspersed throughout the book. Pelonia's faith was woven into the story in such a way that it didn't seem out of place. Pelonia is a Christian who is sold as a slave to retired Gladiator Caros. From that you can guess where the story is going.

This book held my interest throughout and I found myself staying up to finish the story. For anyone who enjoys a good clean romance with a great storyline this book is for you.

<http://iamareadernotawriter.blogspot...>
