

Gladiatorial Conduct: A Thinkpiece

A 10 Minute Play

By Drew Petriello

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CAST

TIFF: 20s-30s. Female. Not white. A gladiator. Disciplined. Depending on who you ask, she's either too nice or too bitchy.

TURNER: 20s-30s. Male. White. A gladiator. Vulgar and violent.

REFEREE: 30s-60s. Any gender. Any ethnicity. Likes to think they're logical and fair.

CROWD: There are a few ways to handle the crowd, but the simplest way would be to have the crowd entirely in voiceover. Alternatively, if you can somehow cast a large number of people, it would be awesome to have the crowd onstage, or even as plants in the audience. Alternatively, alternatively, the crowd could be one actor with a signs around the stage that read "THE CROWD IS ACTUALLY QUITE LARGE BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE BUDGET FOR A FULL CROWD SO DEAL WITH IT." Regardless of how you decide to handle it, the crowd is bloodthirsty and stupid.

SETTING

A gladiatorial arena.

A Referee stands in the middle of the arena,
speaking into a retro microphone.

REFEREE

Ladies and gentlemen and those adrift in the vast gender sea, welcome back to the First Annual Actual American Gladiator Tournament, streaming exclusively on Nestlé TV Plus! Nestlé TV Plus: chocolate for children, by children.

The crowd cheers.

REFEREE

This match-up has been long anticipated, so without delay: on the right, we have the one and only Cucker of Cucks, the Bloody Chud, the Proudest of Boys, the Pinwheeler of PC Limbs himself... Turner!

Turner bursts in, grandstanding around the arena with his sword. The crowd goes wild. The Referee chuckles a little.

Turner holds his hand up in an okay sign to cheers from the crowd.

REFEREE

And on the left, we have the one and only... Tiff!

Tiff enters the arena with dignity and grace. The crowd is quiet. A cough.

Tiff smirks. Just the tiniest bit.

The crowd boos.

REFEREE

Settle down, everyone, settle down. We're here to see violence. We're here to see sportsmanlike conduct. We're here to -

Turner charges at Tiff. Tiff avoids his sword.

REFEREE

There goes Turner, taking a swing before I've even started the clock! Oh man, this is just classic Turner.

The crowd goes nuts.

TIFF

Are you going to enforce that?

Quiet.

REFEREE

What was that, Tiff?

TIFF

He attacked before the clock. That's a penalty.

The crowd boos.

REFEREE

That's just the way Turner is. Come on, he's not serious about it, it's just what he does.

TIFF

But it's against the rules.

Turner takes another swing.

TIFF

Rules need to be enforced!

REFEREE

Come on, Tiff, it's all in good fun.

Turner presses the attack. His swings are wild, hammering. Tiff defends herself with sturdy blocks from her own sword.

REFEREE

Turner is pressing the attack -- with each swing of his mighty sword, Tiff goes reeling, but she's holding her own very well! I would like to take this opening salvo as a time to remind everyone -- in the live audience or streaming on Nestlé TV Plus, thank you to our whimsical overlords -- there is to be no killing. I remind you, no killing, Turner. It'd be a shame to trigger the blogosphere again like when you lopped off Jimmy C's head.

Turner winds up a mighty blow and swings.
Tiff blocks, pushes his sword off of hers.

Tiff makes her first offensive attack of the
match, right at Turner's chest level. He just
barely dodges.

REFEREE

Whoa whoa whoa!

The crowd makes a scandalized gasp. The
Referee blows an airhorn. Henceforth, it shall be
known as the "penalty airhorn."

REFEREE

We have a penalty, halt the match.

TIFF

About time. Jesus.

REFEREE

That sword stroke was a stroke to kill! At chest-level? Tiff, you could have gotten
Turner's heart and he'd have died! There is strictly no killing!

TIFF

These swords are very dangerous. It's hard not to cause grievous injury.

REFEREE

Please don't make excuses. Settle down. Have some dignity.

REFEREE

The rules are rules Tiff. A penalty is in order!

CROWD

Penalty! Penalty! Penalty!

TIFF

Turner's attacks could have killed me! He was going for my head, aren't you going to
penalize him?

The crowd boos.

REFEREE

Settle down -- don't divert us from your conduct, Tiff. I bestow upon you... the Penalty Boot!

The Referee produces the penalty boot. The boot is made of metal, large, and cumbersome. There is a frowny face painted on it. The crowd cheers.

The Referee puts it on Tiff.

REFEREE

Swords at the ready: fight!

Turner charges again. Again, Tiff blocks. She drags the boot around, having difficulty moving, but she's still doing a very good job of defending herself.

Turner hits Tiff's sword hard. It flies out of her hands. The crowd cheers.

Turner raises his sword high.

With a yell of effort, Tiff kicks him in the gut with the boot.

An "ooh" goes up from the crowd.

REFEREE

Whoa...

TURNER

Did you see that? She used the penalty boot! No fair!

The Referee blows the penalty airhorn.

REFEREE

That she did. Tiff. Come on, you've got to play by the rules. You cannot attack with anything other than the sword.

TIFF

But you just said I can't attack with the sword because it's against the rules to kill.

REFEREE

Uh, yeah you can attack with the swords. Of course you can. Duh. Why else would you have swords? You just can't attack to kill. Mm'k? Are you the ref here? No. No you are not. I'm the ref. I'm the one who is refereeing. That'll be another... Penalty Boot!

The crowd cheers as the Referee produces another penalty boot, trying to hold it over their head, but it's really heavy. This one has a puking faces painted on the toes.

The Referee secures it to Tiff's other foot.

REFEREE

Don't sink to Turner's level, Tiff.

TIFF

You could penalize him.

REFEREE

Why? No one takes him seriously. I mean... look at that clown.

Turner places his sword between his thighs like a penis. He thrusts in the air and grunts.

Right, swords at the ready!

CROWD

Turner, Turner, Turner, Turner!

Turner rips off his armor, revealing a big Three Percenter tattoo.

The crowd cheers. The Referee laughs. Tiff is rattled for a second, then gets back into it.

REFEREE

Oh man.

(clears throat)

Fight!

Turner leaps and jabs with his sword. Tiff defends herself admirably for someone who can hardly move.

TURNER

Yeah, take that you genetically-inferior slime! Yeah, yeah, I bet you like rubbing clits, fucking lesbo groomer bitch. Cry harder, SJW. Oooh bitch, I'm gonna getchu you, ooooh bitch I'm gonna getchu!

The crowd laughs and cheers.

The Referee is overcome with side-splitting laughter.

TURNER

Gonna getchu, bitch! Gonna getchu, bitch!

CROWD

Gonna getchu, bitch! Gonna getchu, bitch!

Turner brings his sword down, she guards. They strain against each other, blade to blade. Tiff shoves him off of her.

TIFF

Back off, Nazi!

Silence.

REFEREE

Well then.

The Referee blows the penalty airhorn.

TIFF

What?

TURNER

Wow, Tiff. I can't believe you'd say something like that.

REFEREE

Hey, Tiff, settle down. You can't go around accusing people of being Nazis. Okay?

TIFF

There's a swastika carved into the hilt of his sword!

TURNER

It's just a joke! Come on, can't you take a joke, Tiff?

TIFF

Are you --? It's clearly not a joke! He chopped off Jim Crow's head while shouting "white power!"

REFEREE

His gladiatorial persona was Jimmy C, thank you very much.

TURNER

I was just joking! God, you don't have to be such an NPC about things.

TIFF

Ref!

REFEREE

Tiff... Tiff... he's just joking. That's just the way he is. I'm going to have to give you... the Penalty Glove!

The crowd cheers.

The penalty glove is the same as the penalty boot. Except it's a glove. Painted text on the glove reads: "Sponsored by Juul."

Turner exits.

REFEREE

(fastening the glove to Tiff)

Settle down. You can't let Turner bait you like that.

Turner returns with a spear

The Referee barely has time to stand up before Turner chucks the spear at Tiff. He misses and it lands right next to her.

REFEREE

Whoa! I haven't even started the clock yet, but we're off to an exciting start!

The crowd cheers.

TIFF

Aren't you...? Ugh!

Throws the spear back at Turner. She misses.

The crowd gasps.

Referee blows the penalty airhorn.

REFEREE

Tiff, I can't believe that you would bring an illegal weapon to the match.

TIFF

Turner threw it at me!

REFEREE

Really? I kind of just saw the spear get thrown in. I didn't see who threw it.

TURNER

Yeah, where'd you get that spear from, snowflake?

TIFF

It was Turner.

REFEREE

Settle down with your accusations, okay? That's another penalty glove!

The Referee holds up the penalty glove. This one says "plz don't google 'nestle baby formula africa.'"

Crowd cheers.

The Referee fastens it to Tiff's other hand.

TIFF

What about my sword?

The Referee puts the handle between her teeth.

REFEREE

You got this. Turner's a clown.

TIFF

(with a mouthful of sword)

...wghath?

REFEREE

Swords up! Fight!

Turner throws down his sword. He walks over to the immobile Tiff.

Tiff tries to swing her sword with her head. It's a nice effort, but completely ineffective.

Turner slaps her. The sword flies out of her mouth.

The crowd laughs.

TIFF

Turner hit me with an illegal move!

REFEREE

You know Turner. Expect him to play dirty, Tiff.

Turner continues to hit Tiff around.

The crowd cheers him on.

Turner hits her and she reels around the arena. This is a pummelling, brutal and not fun at all.

Turner grabs her by the hair. Turner hits her in the gut repeatedly.

Tiff goes down.

The crowd is practically orgiastic.

REFEREE

Tiff is incapacitated! The match is over!

The Referee is about to blow the whistle, but Turner snatches it out of the Referee's hand.

REFEREE

Um... Turner.. could you... please give me that? Please? The match is over and I'm asking you so nicely.

TURNER

Nah.

REFEREE

(raising up the penalty airhorn)

Turner, I'm going to have to penalize you for -

Turner takes the penalty airhorn.

TURNER

Nah.

The crowd cheers unceasingly.

Turner drags Tiff out of the arena.

The Referee timidly gets closer to Turner.

REFEREE

Turner, um, please, the match is over.

TURNER

Nah.

Tiff's limbs fly into the arena as Turner hacks them off.

The crowd cheers.

The Referee meekly paces and wrings their hands.

Turner returns to the arena holding Tiff's head in one hand, the airhorn in the other.

Turner grandstands and blows the airhorn. The crowd roars.

As lights fade, the words "A NESTLÉ TV+ EXCLUSIVE" are projected.

THE END