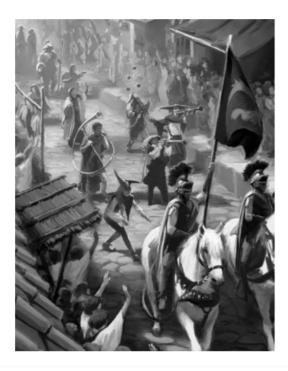
vho will appear tomorrow!"

mmed the sidewalks, so Marcus could not get through. Now oice but to put down the laundry sack and wait.

on white horses led the parade, their riders waving bright of horn players followed, and then acrobats and jugglers, stout man with a leering smile. He was the *lanista* — the se gladiators.

ta waved at the crowd, proud as an emperor. Owning as a dirty business; no respectable person would do it. But ad grown rich on the blood of his gladiators, and he held his



And then there was Cyclops, led by two young women in brig! who were throwing rose petals.

"There he is!" a woman in the crowd shrieked, pointing at the muscled brute.

The champion wore a gleaming bronze helmet. His massive s matched the armor strapped to his bulging legs and arms. A leath hid his blind eye. Scars covered his face. Marcus had heard terrif stories about this man — that he had jaws like a tiger's, that his b was like a panther's scream, that he could snap a man's neck with hand.

The crowd cheered and hooted as Cyclops passed.

But people stood silently as the next four men walked by. The the wretched souls who would be thrown into the arena with Cyc tomorrow. None of them had a chance against Cyclops. By tomor afternoon, they'd all be dead.

Marcus couldn't bear to watch them. But then he caught sight last man in line.

Marcus froze, staring.

The man was tall, with golden hair streaming out of his bronz helmet. He walked slowly, with dignity. A guard followed him, jal him in the back with a spear to move him along.

The man turned his head, and the sun lit up his proud face ar glinting blue eyes.

Could it be?

The pounding in Marcus's heart told the answer.

And suddenly Marcus was running wildly into the street.

"Tata!" Marcus screamed.