

# SPARTACIUS

## THE BRINGER OF RAIN

[www.thebringerofrain.net](http://www.thebringerofrain.net)

### INTERVIEW WITH NICK E. TARABAY

FEBRUARY 2011

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *First of all, thank you for allowing me and your fans to interview you! It's very nice of you! Well, let's start with how did you start your career as an actor?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Thank YOU for taking the time to conduct this interview, I really appreciate it! And thanks to all the fans for their continuous support of me and of our show. When I think of how I started my career I always think of my father. He was a very tough straight forward guy that didn't laugh much. So it was my mission to find ways to make him laugh. I would say jokes or imitate some family member till finally I saw a hint of hope. He smiled, and that was a huge success to me! LOL and later I would use the same technique to get out of trouble. But later in my life when I decided to do this for a living, and actually get paid for it, I started with what I thought is the right way for actors to start. The Theatre! I started taking classes in NYC, started reading plays and I fell head over heels in love with acting, and it's been a love story ever since.

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Would you tell us a little about your childhood? When did you move to the United States?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Born and rise in Lebanon. I have 2 brothers and one sister. I'm number 3 in the family. Growing up I hated school ( and I still do ) hahaha... I wanted to be a soccer player. That was my ultimate dream. I loved soccer so much that I'd sleep with soccer ball next to me every night. Soccer was my freedom, my passion, my truth. I played semi pro for a while and was really good at it. But in the end I had to pay more attention to my school and little less on my game. So slowly the dream started to get farther and farther away... And when I came to the states in the early 90's soccer wasn't that popular here. And I had to work and go to school so I stopped playing altogether, but deep inside of me I missed it so much. I missed the feeling I'd get when I played. The only thing that ever replaced that was acting!! That's another reason why I love acting so much. Not just cause it fulfilled that feeling I missed but because it was my connection to my childhood too. To My heart

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *When you saw yourself on the screen for the first time, what were you thinking?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** First I thought "Oh my God, I look fat!" LOL Then I knew this is where I belong. This is what I'm meant to do for the rest of my life

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Which genre is the closest to you?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** I like to play all genres and hopefully I'll get the opportunity to do so. But if I have to choose I'd say thrillers and comedy. I love complex characters. The more F\*%& up they are the better I like them. I like to take roles that provokes people, that make waves

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and that sometimes pisses people off. I like to take roles people don't necessary like. Those are the most memorable characters anyway. I like to be challenged and that is a reason why I like comedy too. It's very challenging and it takes talent, hard work and great timing to make it happen. Comedians are like scientist to me. LOL

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Is there any Nick in Ashur and the other way around, any Ashur in Nick?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Of course there is. Any character an actor plays has to come from them, through them. You just have to have the right filter to what to let out and what to keep in. All of us have all the elements of life inside of us. We all have hate, anger, love, jealousy, ego, pride, etc... Our job as actors is to safely access which element is needed and bring out. Now having said that doesn't mean you shouldn't do research or observe/ copy certain behaviors. By all means we should. One of the best tools in acting is "Animal exercise" and it's a great tool when starting to work on a character that's a bit challenging. But ultimately everything will go through us. So there has to be a bit of us in it.

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *What do you like to do when you're not working? Do you have time to focus on your personal life?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Personal life! What's that?... Just kidding. Of course personal is very important to an artist. It's the well that we draw from and it's our job to keep that well full. Also it's healthy to have a balance in your life. I love photography. And when I'm not working I like to take my camera and just go... Most of the time I don't know where, I just go! It always works out well for me better than having a plan. Sometimes no plan is the best plan. Spending time with friends is super important too. An acting coach once told me "No matter how much you love something. It cannot be everything in your life."

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *What do you think you would do if you weren't an actor?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** A soccer player, of course. But if I have to choose a career in this stage of my life, I'd say a photographer.

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Is there anyone you'd really like to work with? Who was your favorite actor growing up?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** That's a huge list, but again if I have to choose one. I'd LOVE to work with Anthony Hopkins!!! But growing up I loved Alec Baldwin. He shaped the type of roles that I ended up liking. I was drawn to his intensity.

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**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Now tell me what your first day on the Spartacus set was like?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Grand! Walking on the huge sets for the first time and seeing all the big gladiators around... I was like "shit! I better bring my game on" LOL

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Does the Starz series „Crash” have anything to do with getting a role in Spartacus: Blood and Sand?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** YES! After the first season of Crash ended, I learned that they were going in a different direction for season 2, and my character as well as some others will not be coming back. Which was a bit sad cause I really enjoyed working on that series, but I started going in on others jobs. That's when my team received a call from Starz saying that they would like for me to join their new show "Spartacus". I auditioned and the rest is history. I'm very grateful though that things turned out this way. Spartacus has been a great journey for me!

**THE BRINGER OF RAIN.NET:** *Beside the second season of Spartacus, what's next for Nick Tarabay?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Who knows... I am working on producing and acting in play in the future which I'm very excited about. Also there is short film I'm co-writing and hopefully directing (it'll be my directorial debut) but that's gonna take some time though. But I'm not going anywhere...

### FAN QUESTIONS

**ROGER WARREN:** *What can you tell us about the involvement of your character in Season 2 of Blood and Sand?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Roger. Unfortunately, I don't know the exact details yet, but he's pretty involved, as he always is. From my understanding you will see yet another layer of Ashur. So I'm just as anxious as you are brother. LOL

**NAZIA:** *What has been your most embarrassing moment on set so far?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Nazia. Good question! Not quite sure to be honest with you but I'll tell you this. I remember the first time I saw Doctore chiseled body without his vest on... I felt pretty embarrassed. As a lot of us did... HAHHAHA

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**HELEN:** *Is Ashur really in love with Naevia or did he just want to sleep with her to piss Crixus off? Remember he said "I have had my eyes on you for a long time but you were far from my reach" or something like that.*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Helen. No... sadly, he is not. That was pure vengeance! He was just toying with her when he said all these things. Though, as it is evident she is very easily to fall in love with. LOL

**MANDY:** *If you had to describe your experience working on Spartacus in one sentence, what would it be? And on the same token, how would you describe the show itself in one sentence?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Mandy. One sentence hmmm... Layers upon layers upon layers for me! And I would describe the show as "Heartfelt, truthful, provocative and straight forward RAW!"

**NAKISHA JONES:** *Why is Ashur such a punk? Admittedly his character does make things more interesting, but do you see any redeeming qualities in his character? Or is he just misunderstood?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Nakisha. I don't know about a punk. He is way more complex than that. He has a lot of redeeming qualities but circumstances hasn't allowed him to show that fully yet. But there's always hope. See Ashur isn't necessary "Bad". He is the product of his society. I always believed that, THAT Ashur (the bad man in Blood and Sand) was born in the Ludus cause of what he had to go through, but that's not who he is

**JOANNE:** *Ashur is a slick guy. Do you think (in the season finale of B&S when confronted by Doctore about Barca) Ashur would have been slick enough to pull off short term memory loss? "Who's Barca?"*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Joanne. Now why didn't I think of that?!... LOL Lying wouldn't have worked with Doctore. But Ashur sure did come up with a better plan. Distraction!! See what makes the difference between a smart person and a not so smart one isn't just how good they can lie, but also the ability to know WHEN to lie. Timing is everything!

**MIKEY PEREZ:** *You are significantly more shredded in the prequel. I am big into fitness and I was wondering how many hours a day and for how long did you have to work out to get your gladiator body? How many calories were you allowed in a day? And what was your weight in the first episode of Blood and Sand and then what was your weight in the first episode of Gods of the Arena? Love your character!*

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**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Mikey. Firstly thank you for your compliment. Oh man, oh man, did I work out! But it wasn't so much the work out, cause that's part of daily rotten, of course I upped it a bit, but what mostly changed for me was the DIET. That's the key brother. You can be in the gym 24/7 but if you don't watch your diet it won't make much of a difference. I can't go in details about my diet cause it'll take forever but if you go to Bodybuilding.com and type in my name. You'll see the interview I did with them just recently and there I explain in details my diet and my workout. Hope that helps man. Thanks! Oh, In B&S I weigh 195 and in GOTA about the same but mostly muscles

**DAVID KASHFI:** *What was it like to work with Lucy Lawless and what did you like best about working with her?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey David. Lucy is just great. Very supportive, very talented and of course very pretty. I wish I had more work with her, but nevertheless she was awesome. I mostly like her sense of humor on the set.

**ANDREW DIXEY:** *Nick, you have a remarkable voice, which is really what makes your performance as the silver tongued Ashur so compelling to watch. Have you ever used that voice in real life to get what you want, and if so what was it?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Andrew. Thank you for the nice compliment. Yes, I have to admit. I have used my voice to my advantage many times and many times it worked... LOL I can't think of a particular incident but a lot in acting! And a lot with the ladies back in the day. Hahaha

**MICHELLE T. McCARTHY:** *What has been the most challenging aspect of showing your character's personality in this prequel compared to who your character becomes in Blood and Sand?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Michelle. The most challenging aspect would be Ashur's point of no return, the point of transition between who he is and who he ends up becoming, and why. See, in the beginning Ashur showed a lot of vulnerability and openness. He wanted so much to be part of the brotherhood. To be excepted, respected and loved. He tried his hardest to be truthful and straight forward with the gladiators. He respected them and tried to stay out of their way, but soon it all changed when he was faced on more than one occasion with their animosity and humiliation for a fault not of his own. He just followed Batiatus' orders (Which he had no choice in the matter, He is but a slave) He didn't ask to kill his friend in EP 2. He didn't ask to receive the mark without the test. And he's sure did tried his very best in the arena when paired with Dagan and did not coward. But again he was faced with more humiliation only this time from Doctore when he said "you are half the man he is" That's when the Ashur we got to know in season one was born!

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**ERICA CASANOVA:** *A lot of people are suddenly quite fond of you and your chiseled GotA body. Does that make up for all the hard training or do you prefer to be Ashur the Snake / Nick the guy who smiles at the gladiators while he takes a dessert from the catering table?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Erica. I have to admit I do LOVE dessert! LOL it's one of my weaknesses. But yeah for sure it pays off. As anything in life that you work hard for and get good results in the end. And I really appreciate the admiration the fans are having with Ashur this season! It was really hard ( in way ) in season one, cause I made the choice to gain weight for my character. It only made sense to me. When I was working on my back story I thought to myself. Ashur was at some point, long time ago a gladiator and now he is a bookie. He hadn't or couldn't train due to his injuries. So it only make sense that he would be out of shape. So I started putting on fat, and I got a little out of shape. My own clothes didn't fit me anymore... that was the hardest part, but it was my responsibility as an artist to be true to my character, to the story and to the fans!

**MIRRIAM:** *What dialect of Arabic were you using when speaking to Dagan in GotA? Was it an ancient version? By the way, you kick ass.*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Mirriam. It wasn't Arabic at all. It was Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, a dead language. We had to learn it with each script we received. We would get a recording with what it's supposed to sound like along with the translation and we would go to work. I think the most challenging part was not just memorizing the words, but trying to make them your own. Which is very hard when you have no clue to what the hell you saying...HAHAHA But overall we had a lot of fun doing it!

**ANDY:** *What's it like portraying a character in Blood and Sand and then having to build the character in Gods of the Arena? Is it more challenging as an actor?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Andy. It was a lot of fun to be honest with you. I think Lucy said it in an interview and she was 100% right. Most of the time actors don't get the opportunity to go back in time and tell the back story of their characters, but we had the privilege to do so which I think it only adds to your confidant as an actor playing a role and it helps the audience to understand the story better. It makes them part of our journey, It creates a connection both for the actor and the character he or she's playing and the audience with the character.

**NICOLE S.:** *Did you prefer playing a real gladiator like in the prequel or was it more fun to be Batiatus' right hand like in Season 1? What was more challenging?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Nicole. I actually like them both and I have to say, I feel really lucky to get the chance to do both on the same show. Most of the time you're either one or the

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other but I got to do them both!! And I think I'm the only one that got to do that.. HAHAAH... They were both challenging in their own way but I have to say playing Ashur in season 1 took more work from me. His stillness, his thought process, his layers ( which he has a lot of ) his limp and one of hardest challenges was being pushed around most of the time. That is one thing that is far, far, far from me, so I had to work really hard to find that side of me and bring it out, And every once in while my ego will get the best of me, but the actors/friends around me made it easier for me to let that go.

**ROBERTO SUAREZ (Jupiters Rooster podcast):** *The character of Ashur reminds me of Iago in Shakespeare's "Othello". Where do you draw inspiration from for your performance?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Roberto. Funny you say that cause that was the first thing I thought of when I read the script! Great minds huh..... Well Shakespeare is definitely a big help, but one thing I always look for which I think always help is, to find my character's heart. Especially when playing such a dark character with lots of layers. What is he long for? What's his noble goal? How well does he know his obstacles? His enemies? And then trust the writing to give you yet another layer on top of all your inner feeling and goals. Cause most of the time the audience don't know your character's secret (Which is another important thing to have as an actor, a secret that no one knows but yourself) they only see what you do and how you do it.

**GLYN BISHOP:** *How difficult was it to remember to limp in the first Spartacus series?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Glyn. HAAAAHA wasn't that hard cause after 7 months of wearing that heavy brace on my leg I actually started to have a real limp! LOL Another challenge right?... But for real... in the beginning it was a bit challenging but then, the more you rehearse, the more it become more than just a limp. It becomes part of your character. To me it was his motivation. His constant reminder of what he was and what he is now. It's the engine that drives him to excel.

**PENNY DOUGLAS:** *I love the show and I bet you are really a nice guy in real life. My question is, What did you enjoy most about your role as Ashur? And what was the most fun and what was the least fun? You really are a great villan.... as Ashur!*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Penny. Thanks for your compliment. What I enjoyed the most was the challenge that the role of Ashur presented. I never quite played a role like that. And Actors we strive for challenges. I usually get parts like Crixus or even Spartacus sometimes. But Ashur... not really. In the beginning I use to think to myself "I'm not the right person for this role, I would think I wouldn't hire me for it" LOL... Which I think why it works even better. Seeing how dark and complex this character is made look very very hard into his heart and the greater good in him! And the more I did, the more it made sense and the more it hit the

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audiences on a personal level that some may be able to identify with. Some may know someone like this, or even did something like he did. Some may understand and sympathize and some may hate and reject, but either way, that only meant they connected with character on some level or another, and that's what an actor's job is. Connection!!

**STEPHANIE:** *Mr. Tarabay, Ashur is a fascinating character - both good and bad, funny and mean - spirited, prideful yet a coward. You have found an excellent balance between these characteristics and created one of the best characters in the Spartacus story. What is your thought process to bring such a complex character as Ashur to the screen?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Stephanie. As I said before. It's all about trying to find his heart, his goals, what drives him, what makes him happy. What makes him laugh and what makes him hate? Most of all not judging him, cause that's a dead end to an actor. I appreciate the support!

**LUCORZSA:** *A lot of people think Ashur is a bad guy. Even before Gods of the Arena, where we got a good look at why Ashur is the way he is, I felt that there was more to Ashur than him just being a sneaky, back-stabbing mini-villain. I was wondering what you think about Ashur. Can you sympathize with him and the way things turned out for him? Is he more than just a mini-villain?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Lucorzsa, Nice name by the way, I really like it. Of course I can and do sympathize with him. As you said there is more to him, and as I said he wasn't born a bad person, quite the contrary actually, he was made that way in the Ludus. The house of honor supposedly. He is a product of his society, a reaction to what has happened to him. I personally think Ashur is the ultimate survivor. A warrior that refuses give in or give up his fight. An intelligent man who found his true strength. Something not a lot have. His brain! Which is the ultimate weapon.

**JASON:** *Nick, in GotA, many actresses wear merkins. Why do you choose to wear your merkin on your chin? Thanks, love your work!*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** LOL....

**JEN:** *If you could meet anyone, past or present, who would it be and why?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Jen. A lot actually. Good question, Let me see... I would say Nelson Mandela! To go through what he went through and have the power to forgive and lead. Now that's a true hero. People like that to come by often.



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**KAITIE:** *How do you feel about playing a character that is so hated? Do you like creating that feeling in people or would you prefer being a character that people love?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Kaitie. I love it. It means I connected with them on a deeper level. I always love to provoke people with my acting. I like to shake things up. To a certain degree I like, sometimes to piss people off in my acting. These type of characters are the true measure of our heroes. I think our lovely Katrina Law (Mira) said once in an interview that a show is as good as it's villains, and I for one agree with her. In a way villains are the ones that makes you really fall in love with the hero. So villains are heroes in their own way, right? LOL... But don't get me wrong who doesn't wanna be loved? I just love making waves!

**MATT:** *How different was Ashur's backstory/origins, as revealed in 'Gods of the Arena', to what you imagined originally when portraying him in 'Blood and Sand'? Was there anything that surprised you? Did you have any input into the character's past?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Matt. It was different quit honestly. I imagined him as a really good gladiator, almost the champion. A true threat to Crixus. Which makes Crixus' betrayal deeper to Ashur And what would justifies why Batiatus would even bother keeping him around after his injuries and make him his personal bookie! So I was surprised when I saw that it wasn't the case. I had to do more homework and research to justifies his behavior and his motives. Which was challenging, and again I love a challenge. As far as input, unfortunately we didn't have much this season, due to the short amount of time they had to write the prequel. But overall, I think it turned out good

**CRIXALICIOUS:** *Let me begin by saying that you are truly a gifted actor and, if I am not mistaking, you mentioned that you would love to be in HBO's "In Treatment", well, I relish at the thought of seeing your name among the cast. That show needs an actor of your caliber. Now, my question is: Is Ashur the lowdown snake that we have come to know in Season 1 due to circumstances or as he always been that way, right from the first episode of GOTA?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Man. Thank you much for your kind words. I really appreciate it. Just an FYI I'd love to be in "Entreatment" just to work with Gabriel Byres. I think he is awesome! Again as I said Ashur (The one from season 1) was born in the Ludus. He didn't start out like this. Yes, his surrounding/circumstances made him who he end up becoming.

**DAVID:** *What do you think, what will be Ashur's plan of escape from the ludus given the Roman law about slaves who kill their Dominus? He seems to have no friends in the ludus, if Lucretia lives can he trust her to keep him alive? And Syria is a long, long, way from Capua. What will he do?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey David. That's really good question but one for the writers, I believe. But don't you worry about Ashur, He'll find a way. He always does!

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**MARC MICHAUD:** *First, I'd like to thank you for what you bring to the show and beyond. I was really impressed with your transition from BandS to GOTA. What type of diet and exercise regime did you use? In the next series of Spartacus will your character resemble the Ashur from Season 1 or from GotA?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Marc. You're quite welcome, It was absolutely my pleasure. As for my transformation, yes, mostly and most importantly it was the diet. Of course I worked a bit harder than usual but the diet is what made the real difference. As I said before I can't go in details about my diet (It will take forever). But If you go to [bodybuilder.com](http://bodybuilder.com) and type in my name you'll see a detailed video interview I did with them recently that will explain it all. Hope that helps, buddy. And yes, I have to go back to my B&S look, unfortunately. It's my responsibility to the audience and to myself to be always true to the work.

**KAYVON GERAMI:** *Hey Nick, flat out with it... What do you suggest we do to hold ourselves over for A YEAR until season two premiers? Can we expect any webisodes, or an Autumn teaser? Something?*

*You see Nick, it's like this... we have waited so long (understandably, and with good reason) but now that we have had a taste of a mini-series, people are likely to start their own backyard arenas just to keep from crawling out of our skins with anticipation... any words of advice?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Kayvon. By all means don't start your own arena... LOL My advice is to buy the DVD and relive the glory over and over and over... HAHHAHA. Also I know Starz are coming up with some new and awesome shows that I'm sure will keep you occupied. Such as Camelot... This one looks good!

**ERICA CASANOVA:** *Does it suck to play such a perfidious Bastard or are you having a blast?*

**NICK E. TARABAY:** Hey Erica. Well, if I thought of him as such, I bet it would suck. That's just one his layers. If you look closely, you'll slowly find out more and more. He's way more complex than that and for that reason... YES, I am having a blast and will continue to do so!

February, 2011