

**LEVIAN**

**SEASON 1, EPISODE 1: OATH**

**RELEASE DATE: JULY 19, 2023**

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**Content Warnings:** Sexual situations (00:50 - 01:48; 18:13 - 18:53).

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*[waves rolling. seabirds calling. transition to:]*

*[lots of voices, indistinct dialogue. a horse whinnies. music fades in, muffled staccato synth]*

*[running footsteps. a door creaks open. the music, now violin, gets louder and clearer. the background voices also get louder, but are still indistinct]*

**VALENTIN:** *[with a warm chuckle]* Evening, Meadow!

**MEADOW:** And a glorious one indeed. What can I do for you gentlemen?

*[coins clink]*

**VALENTIN:** Oh, we'll need a room for the night.

**MEADOW:** Of course. Anyone's company you seek?

**VALENTIN:** Each other's will do just fine.

*[keys jingle]*

**MEADOW:** First floor, then.

*[rapid footsteps. a door opens and shuts, silencing the outside noise and music]*

*[panting, laughter. a belt clinks]*

**VALENTIN:** ...You've yet to give me a name.

*[clothes hit the floor]*

**MYSTERY MAN:** Tonight I have none, sir.

**VALENTIN:** Oh, borrow it if you must.

**MYSTERY MAN:** Why does it matter?

**VALENTIN:** Because you're going to move your hands down my waist, as such—

*[clothes rustle]*

**VALENTIN:** And then you'll deal with my belt.

*[belt clinks]*

**VALENTIN:** Unravel me.

*[more rustling and clinking]*

**MYSTERY MAN:** *[soft gasp]*

**VALENTIN:** And then you'll kneel.

*[movement]*

**VALENTIN:** And—not yet, not yet.

*[Valentin's partner is breathing heavily]*

**VALENTIN:** Only when I say so.

**MYSTERY MAN:** What will I do next?

**VALENTIN:** You'll take me with your mouth. Entirely. And twist my soul around the tip of your tongue—but no!

*[The mystery man is panting desperately]*

**VALENTIN:** Not yet, I said.

**MYSTERY MAN:** *[tremulous]* Please.

**VALENTIN:** Not until you give me a name. To whisper. To cry out.

**BEAU:** Beau. Call me Beau.

*[cloth rustling. Valentin and Beau panting, sighing, and—]*

*[heavy footsteps outside as the music fades back in. suddenly the door is bashed open. Valentin cries out]*

**GUARD:** In here, my lady.

**VALENTIN:** What is the meaning of this?!

*[slow, measured footsteps. muffled crowd sounds from another room]*

**TANATHEA:** Brother.

**VALENTIN:** Tanathea...?

**TANATHEA:** Seize him.

*[movement, jangling]*

**VALENTIN:** A step further and you're a dead man, Captain.

**TANATHEA:** Drunk and bare against a city knight, and you think yourself a threat?

**GUARD:** There will be no bloodshed tonight, my lord. Despite your... affliction, Lady Tanathea seeks a fair trial for you.

*[muffled applause and cheering from the distant crowd]*

**GUARD:** Surrender yourself quietly, and we shall—

**TANATHEA:** Enough!

*[metallic SHING of a sword]*

**TANATHEA:** Valentin Tellari, you stand accused of perversion and debauchery. You've debased our name and our family's legacy. Accept this trial, or I will strike you where you stand.

**VALENTIN:** *[chuckles]* You don't want me as a foe, Thea.

**TANATHEA:** I hardly wanted you as a brother. Seize him.

*[thudding footsteps]*

**VALENTIN:** Will you trial this tall whore you've sent for me as well? He was quite convincing!

**TANATHEA:** Excellent work indeed, Beau.

*[jingle of coins]*

**TANATHEA:** Begone now.

**VALENTIN:** *[being marched away]* Unhand me, you *cretin!* Where are you taking me?! I said unhand me!

*[dialogue fades back to the sound of rolling waves]*

*[the waves fade to the sounds of a large crowd. many voices, echoing, interrupted abruptly by several gavel bangs]*

**JUDGE:** SILENCE!

*[All goes quiet]*

**JUDGE:** The court calls its first witness!

*[slow, measured footsteps]*

**JUDGE:** Your name?

**MEADOW:** Meadow.

**JUDGE:** Swear yourself to the truth, Meadow.

**MEADOW:** My word is my blood, and my blood bound to the sea. If I betray the one, may I drown in the other.

*[a sea breeze...]*

**VALENTIN (VOICEOVER):** I look at them. The three judges that will decide my fate. A merchant prince on the right, ancient and distorted in both mind and body.

*[coins jingling]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** His pockets full of my sister's gold.

*[Tanathea laughs. Glasses clink]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** A judiciar in the center—

*[more gavel bangs]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** —young and full of himself, all chin and no guts. Tanathea's venom drooling from his lips. And on the left, laid back on her chair, gazing out a window, is a captain. A lady. Blue coat and white shirt, scorched by the sun, scraped by the salt, blessed by the sea.

*[whalesong]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** The dark tentacles of her hair unfurling down her back.

Her eyes seem a little too big for her face, part of her left ear has been clawed by... something, and the scar across her nose looks like she shouldn't have survived it.

She had looked at me once, as the guards had dragged me into the courtroom. And then never again. Together, they were the three pillars of our society. A pile of gold, a zealous whip, and the heartless sea.

*[sounds of the sea stop]*

**JUDGE:** Lady Meadow. Do you recognize the accused?

**MEADOW:** Valentin Tellari. A familiar face in my establishment.

**JUDGE:** Which establishment?

**MEADOW:** I own the Leaning Lighthouse, the... tavern on the south docks.

**VALENTIN:** "Tavern" is what we're calling it today?

**JUDGE:** *[single gavel bang]* Quiet! You will speak only when I command it.

*[chains rattle and then clank—Valentin laughs]*

*[the sea fades back in]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Two of them were caught in my sister's web. And the third one did not care if I lived or died. This was no trial, it was theatre.

And I could feel its playwright's glee as she sat in the audience somewhere behind me. When Tanathea is... sated—because "happy" isn't the word—she crosses her hands behind her back and rubs her fingers together. She curls and stretches her toes, reveling in secret, squirming like a leech.

But most importantly, she doesn't smile. She keeps up the role of the perfect young widow, struck by yet another tragedy.

*[the sea breeze stops]*

**JUDGE:** Lady Meadow. Did Sir Tellari ever entertain company in your establishment?

**MEADOW:** Why yes, of course. Such a charming fellow cannot keep his own company for long.

**JUDGE:** What kind of company?

**MEADOW:** All kinds. Though, while my girls have always delighted in his stories, none of them were ever taken upstairs to hear the end. That's a privilege he kept for the young men I shelter, or the occasional sailor.

**VALENTIN:** *[laughs]* And yet this remains *my* trial?

**JUDGE:** *Silence—*

*[a chair scrapes the floor]*

**VALENTIN:** I WILL NOT SIT HERE AND BE CONDEMNED FOR A SIN *SHE* HARVESTS!

**JUDGE:** ENOUGH!

*[clank of chains, as if Valentin has been pushed back into his seat]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** I see the guard standing beside me tighten his grip on his sword.

*[leather glove creaking]*

**JUDGE:** Another word, and I will have you muzzled like the beast you are!

**MEADOW:** We are merely a tavern, Sir Tellari. How our guests entertain themselves is at *their* discretion.

**JUDGE:** Thank you, Lady Meadow.

**MEADOW:** Your highness.

*[footsteps walking away]*

*[sea breeze and waves fading in]*

**JUDGE:** The court calls its next witness!

*[wood creaking]*

**JUDGE:** State your name and swear yourself to the truth.

*[the waves are getting louder]*

**NEW VOICE:** My word is my blood, and my blood bound to the sea. If I betray the one, may I drown in the other. My name is Elaina Vissian.

*[the sea stops]*

**ELAINA VISSIAN:** I was the Tellaris' physician until their parents' passing.

**JUDGE:** What fell Lord and Lady Tellari, Lady Vissian?

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** I'm looking at him with my eyes wide open. And under my breath, I can't help it. I whisper—

**VALENTIN:** *[whispering]* What is this...?

**DR. VISSIAN:** Sailor's Fever, your highness. The entire family and most of their servants. Valentin and Tanathea were amongst the few survivors.

**JUDGE:** Why do they call it Sailor's Fever?

**DR. VISSIAN:** It was brought to us by prisoners and seamen from across the horizon.

**JUDGE:** Did the Tellaris ever entertain the company of sailors?

**DR. VISSIAN:** I cannot speak on the matter, your highness—

*[something creaks]*

**NEW VOICE:** *Never.*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** The third judge has stirred awake. I'm almost surprised when I don't hear him creaking like an old tree, as he locks eyes with me.

**MERCHANT PRINCE:** The Tellaris were wiser than that. They knew Levians, but no sailor.

**JUDGE:** I was taught Levians cannot suffer men's ailments.

**DR. VISSIAN:** That is true, your highness.

**JUDGE:** How, then, do you explain the coming of this disease into the Tellaris' domain?

**MERCHANT PRINCE:** The whore has already spoken. The only soul vile enough to seek plague-ridden lechers... is standing in front of—

*[chains rattling, and a loud, murderous cry from Valentin as the crowd gasps. THUD]*

**VALENTIN:** I WILL HAVE YOUR HEAD! ALL OF YOU! I SWEAR IT ON THE STARS AND THE SEA AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN!

**JUDGE:** GUARDS!

**TANATHEA:** Valentin, please!

**VALENTIN:** ENOUGH OF THIS MASQUERADE, TANATHEA!

*[Tanathea gasps, the crowd is in an uproar]*

**VALENTIN:** Hand my sister a weapon! SOMEONE! If she wants me dead, then put the blade in *her* hand, and let me settle this!

*[impact]*

*[gavel bangs]*

**JUDGE:** Order! Take lord Tellari back to his cell! This madness is adjourned!

*[one last gavel bang takes us into echoing silence, and then back into the sea breeze]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** I hear the breeze of sympathies for Tanathea, as it blows across every lips in the room. I look at my sister, and I see that for once she's looking down.

But I know. I don't need to see her hands. And she's too clever to look at me, because if she did... she would start barking with laughter like a fucking dog.

*[the tide washes us into the next scene]*

*[thudding footsteps. Valentin is thrown and hits the floor. a door slams]*

*[footsteps approach. the space is damp and echoey]*

*[sharp salute]*

**TANATHEA:** I am to speak with my brother alone.

*[heavy, clanking footsteps leave]*

**VALENTIN:** Make my heart sing, Thea. tell me you've heard my plea?

**TANATHEA:** If I wanted you dead, you would never have known.

**VALENTIN:** Disgraced, then? You think this little farce will—

**TANATHEA:** I want you free, Valentin. But I won't suffer your mistakes any longer.

**VALENTIN:** And thus you've decided to make your own.

**TANATHEA:** Oh, spare me your cleverness, Valentin—

**VALENTIN:** You had me dragged out in the *street*, bare and in chains—

**TANATHEA:** Kneel and repent when the judge demands it—

**VALENTIN:** Thrown out in a cell, for 3 days and nights—

**TANATHEA:** —*and you'll be spared execution.*

**VALENTIN:** With all but a bucket in the corner and chaff on the floor!

**TANATHEA:** You will be sentenced to wash this stain from our name until you are deemed worthy of returning—

**VALENTIN:** Until the rest of my days, then?! At the end of your leash?! After you've dug our parents from the grave and smeared their blood all over my hands?!

*[beat]*

**TANATHEA:** *[sighs]* This needn't be so tedious.

*[two footsteps]*

**TANATHEA:** You'll be allowed to stay in the domain, under watch, and I will ensure your recovery. I'll handle your appearances, and mend the ties you've neglected. I'll take charge of

the mills, sit at the merchant council. All your titles and obligations will fall onto me. You'll get to enjoy the fruits of *my* labor without *any* of its burden. All you have to do... is comply.

**VALENTIN:** And what then? Once the ghost of my name has opened the door for you? After your web is spun, and my shadow forgotten. How do I die then, when you no longer need a puppet?

**TANATHEA:** It will be your decision, Valentin.

*[slow, measured footsteps leaving]*

*[Valentin laughs, frazzled. Exhales deeply]*

*[the sea fades back in]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** My name is *Valentin Tellari*. I was raised on a barren rock called the Drumming Isles.

*[ominous music fades in, joining the sea.]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Sea storms raged against our cliffs for half the year, while the sun keeps a spiteful eye on us the rest of the time. Like it awaits an apology and *hates* the elderly.

By all means, this place is uninhabitable. But we are a proud and spiteful people, with centuries spent fighting hurricanes. Our ancestors were masters of a gentle sea, who ventured a little *too* far from shore. A little too close to the great deep... and its monsters.

*[an eerie cry. the sea and the music are both intensifying]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** A storm pulled them towards a raging ocean, where the luckiest of them drowned. And the few that survived were spat out the other side, on the Isles.

*[violent rush of water]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Remained only the worst of us. Enduring, cunning, undying. In this land, we ventured to hunt the biggest game we could find—

*[a weapon whistles through the air, and hits home with a wet thud as the target bellows in pain]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** —and stole their dens. We dug coal and ores from down below, and we started building, forging—

*[clink of pickaxes, roar of flame]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Burning and killing 'til it stopped being a struggle.

*[ringing thud]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** 'Til it became our nature. We survived, and lived, and loved to live. Our breath grew deeper, our frames wider, our voices like thunder.

*[booming thunder]*



**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Generations after generations, we nurtured that spite into strength! We built vessels, and raised captains, and we sent them to free us from this wretched land.

*[crashing waves, rushing water]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** From the hundreds that were sent, only one returned. One, proven worthy of the ocean's blessings. Our very first emperor, chosen by the water itself, the All-Mighty Mother.

*[sounds of the sea continue to intermingle with dramatic music]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** He was the first of his kind, and he called himself... a Levian. For both the blood of man and monsters that ran through his veins. And he became our salvation. The spearhead of an army that ventured overseas, to seek and find all that we were missing in far-away lands.

And we did.

*[birds twittering]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** We discovered gentle skies and fertile soils. But we were not welcome. The men there could not recognize us anymore. They did not want our knowledge, our strengths. They were frail and lazy. They were barely human. They did not deserve to keep what we had lost.

So we took back what we were owed.

*[clash of weapons, voices shouting]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** They tried to stop us, but *no one* could stop us. No one was more alive. To this day, the empire still grows. Our vessels are now the size of castles! Our Levians are hundreds!

*[music fades out. the sea remains]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** But nowadays life on land has been made easy, and few are the ones still braving the ocean. Why would anyone send their children to face its rage anymore?

The ones that still choose the sea are either young enough to think they'll never die, or prisoners on death row. Both desperate souls with no other choice.

For even the worst of us, the wicked and the sadists, even they remain children of the tides. And if the right to be judged by the all-mighty water were denied to any of us... The Isles would be sunk by the ocean's wrath.

And thus, for reasons of old and new, the empire remains hanging by a thread. It needs more meat. More soldiers, and Levians... It needs children. To deprive the empire of its glorious descendants is a crime amongst all of my civilization.

And thus, my trial.

*[the sea fades out]*

*[clanking footsteps in the echoing damp. a door opens]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** And the intermission ends.

*[crowd chattering]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** They've all come to get their pound of flesh. Old friends and enemies alike, their lies and their truth equally wounding. One of them in particular.

*[several gavel bangs]*

**NEW VOICE:** My word is my blood, and my blood is bound to the sea. If I betray the one... may I drown in the other.

**JUDGE:** Speak, my Lord. And speak well.

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Anthony. We grew up like brothers. I admired his manners, his humor. I reveled in his laughter. And as we grew into ourselves, I became so content with our bond. Delighted every time he would wrap an arm around my shoulders, as if to tell the entire world of how lucky we were to have found such... friendship.

**ANTHONY:** I've known Lord Tellari since we were boys. Valentin—I *thought*—was an upstanding gentleman.

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** He had once said he envied my eyes.

Many years ago, as a storm raged on the island, my father forbid him to return home. Insisted he must spend the night. A room was arranged for him, but the both of us stayed awake throughout most of the evening.

It had been a cold night, so instead of parting ways to our quarters, we... huddled in the same bed.

*[bittersweet exhale]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** And we weren't sure what to do with ourselves, once it grew quiet. What to do with... our hands.

I had shivered, I think, and he'd pulled me closer.

*[movement]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** But closer wasn't enough. There was—there... There was hunger. Something that made me want to bite until I drew blood.

*[clothes rustling]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** Something that made him grasp onto my hips as if he had wished to tear me apart.

*[heavy breathing]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** And I wanted him to try, because I knew it could never break me. It would make me.

I remember the exhale I let out as he straddled me—

*[the exhale, and laughter]*

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** —and with the full weight of his body, pushed me against the mattress. And I—

**ANTHONY:** I wanted my children to know the same friendship I had known. But he's robbed my family of this joy—

*[movement]*

**NEW VOICE:** The *same* friendship, my lord?

**ANTHONY:** Yes, Lady Sibi—?

**CAPTAIN SIBI:** *Levian* Sibi.

**ANTHONY:** *Levian* Sibi. I wanted them to know loyalty and honor, to learn from each other that—

*[noises—wet slithering, gurgling]*

*[pulsing drums, like a heartbeat]*

**CAPTAIN SIBI:** Lest you wish to further test my patience, I'd suggest you find your seat.

**ANTHONY:** Y-your highness—?

**JUDGE:** Only *I* may dismiss the witness, *Levian*.

*[noises—crepitation]*

**CAPTAIN SIBI:** Well.

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** She'd barely smiled at him, and the judge's attempt at wrath was blown off like a candle.

She had offered him just a glimpse of the shark teeth behind her lips. He tried to play it off, but all he could muster was a nod towards Anthony, compelling him back to his seat. I looked back at the *Levian*, who held my gaze for a moment, then returned to her idleness.

**JUDGE:** *[clears throat]* The court calls upon its next witness.

*[slow, measured footsteps. the crowd whispers]*

*[wood creaks]*

**TANATHEA:** My word is my blood, and my blood bound to the sea. If I betray the one, may I drown in the other.

A few nights ago, a loyal soul came to tell me... They came to tell me my brother had lost his way, but that I already knew. I *thought* I already knew. There's hardly a tavern in this town he hasn't been thrown out of. The insults made to our closest friends I've had to quell, the debts of honor I had to pay, the gold wasted I've had to account for—but none of this was the matter. What I witnessed, I could not bear.

**JUDGE:** What *have* you witnessed, my lady?

**TANATHEA:** [*getting choked up*] My brother. In a room he paid for with the gold in our name  
—

**VALENTIN:** [*laughs*] The gold in our name, over the blood in our veins!

[*the judge bangs his gavel*]

**TANATHEA:** In a bed, laying with a *man*—

**VALENTIN:** Is that where your loyalty lies, you rawboned vulture?!

**JUDGE:** [*gavel*] ENOUGH!

**TANATHEA:** Under the cover of darkness, making a mockery of the sacred act that binds us all—!

[*SLAM*]

**VALENTIN:** Tell them what you saw! Tell them how I rejoiced and worshipped on an altar of beddings! I renewed my devotion to the All-Mother's creation! But your defiling eyes know nothing of reverence!

[*THUD*]

**JUDGE:** STAND, THEN! STAND AND SPEAK! SEAL YOUR FATE, IF YOU'RE SO EAGER TO! SWEAR YOURSELF TO THE TRUTH, AND LET US BE DONE WITH IT!

[*soft, dramatic music fades in*]

[*chains rattling, wood creaking as Valentin stands*]

**JUDGE:** No need to weight your words, Tellari. You've confessed more than what—

**VALENTIN:** I choose the sea.

[*silence*]

**JUDGE:** What?!

[*Captain Sibi cackles*]

**VALENTIN (V.O.):** She started laughing. The Levian.

[*agitation amongst the crowd*]

**VALENTIN:** I will not be judged by torpid minds cradled by the land. And I won't kneel before this farce of a throne, built on sanctimony!

**TANATHEA:** Valentin—!

**VALENTIN:** I answer to no one but the All-Mother. *I choose the sea.*

**TANATHEA:** Adjourn the trial! This instant!

*[sharp, metallic sound. creak of wood. the crowd gasps, and goes silent]*

*[noises—slithering, gurgling]*

*[Valentin exhales sharply]*

**CAPTAIN SIBI**

An oath to the tides cannot be undone. Welcome aboard... Lord Tellari.

*[ominous, melancholy music]*

**SAMY SOUISSI:** Thank you for listening to Levian. This episode was written, produced, and edited by Samy Souissi, with performances by Feliks Mathur as Valentin, Beth Eyre as Tanathea, Erika Sanderson as Mara Sibi, Chris Magilton as Judge Garson, Jumoké Fashola as Dr. Vissian, Anna Harris as Meadow, Will De-Renzy Martin as Anthony, Giancarlo Herrera as the Merchant Prince, and yours truly as Beau.

*[music ends]*

**SAMY:** We hope you've enjoyed this episode, and stay tuned for more.