

General Animation Series Development Version

Category	Content
Core Positioning	A dark action epic about a warrior from the Korean peninsula thrown into the Roman Colosseum
Expansion Direction	Global adult action animation / serialized season development
Core Appeal	Eastern martial-arts action x Roman gladiatorial spectacle x the tragedy of a vow that cannot survive the arena
Season 1 Scope	Based on Episodes 0-188 of the original webtoon; the entire Roman gladiator arc is treated as one long-form season

Table of Contents

1. Proposal Overview
2. Work Overview and IP Performance
3. Key Selling Points for Animation
4. Media Expansion References
5. Core Character Architecture
6. Season 1 Structure Strategy
7. Detailed Season 1 Synopsis
8. Animation Development Direction
9. Proposal Summary

1. Proposal Overview

Purpose of Proposal

This proposal examines the animation expansion potential of the webtoon <Musa Manrihaeng>. Based on the original work's large-scale Roman gladiator action, distinctive Eastern martial-arts combat, and tragic heroic narrative, the project is positioned as a global adult action animation series.

Core Proposal Statement

<Musa Manrihaeng> brings the fluid movement language of an Eastern warrior into the overwhelming physical arena of the ancient Roman Colosseum. Naru, a fallen guardian warrior of the destroyed kingdom of Gori, crosses a Roman hellscape for one vow: to find and save Princess Sodan. Yet the path to that vow constantly tests another principle he tries to preserve - his refusal to become a murderer.

The animation adaptation should not be framed as a simple process of making the webtoon move. Its value lies in translating superhuman combat, a crowd-filled Colosseum, collapsing temples, burning palaces, and the visual contrast between Rome and Gori into a coherent genre language. Compared with live action, animation can more naturally absorb the work's heightened action, stylized violence, and emotionally driven exaggeration.

Core Positioning

Item	Direction
Genre	Dark action / martial arts / gladiator epic / historical fantasy
Target	Global adult action animation audience
Emotional Core	A vow deeper than revenge, the collapse of principle, the loss of a friend, and a final confrontation with a mad emperor
Differentiation	A rare visual collision between the architectural scale of ancient Rome and the kinetic linework of Eastern martial arts
Season Direction	Season 1 covers the full Roman gladiator arc; Season 2 can expand into the search for Princess Sodan and new territories

2. Work Overview and IP Performance

Brief Introduction

A dark action epic in which a warrior from the Korean peninsula is thrown into the ancient Roman Colosseum and forced to confront the madness of an emperor while struggling between overwhelming violence and a vow of non-killing.

English Logline

A fallen warrior from the Korean peninsula enters the Roman Colosseum as a slave gladiator, carrying the power to face an empire and the vow to save his lost princess.

IP Performance

Category	Key Details
Critical Recognition	Winner of the 2025 Today's Korean Comics Award; winner of the 2025 Korea Cartoonist Association President's Award; selected for the 2018 Korea Manhwa Contents Agency serial comics production support program.
Market Performance	Reached TOP RANK in NAVER WEBTOON's martial arts / historical genre category; achieved approximately KRW 2.2 billion in cumulative domestic and overseas sales as of 2025; in long-running serialization since June 2020.
Global Distribution	Available through Korean NAVER WEBTOON / NAVER Series, Japanese LINE Webtoon, Taiwanese LINE Webtoon, and Chinese LINE Webtoon / Dongman Webtoon channels.
Expansion Potential	The original work already contains dual settings, large-scale Colosseum battles, differentiated combat styles, and season-level dramatic closure, providing strong structural material for animation development.

3. Key Selling Points for Animation

Selling Point 1. Animation is the right medium for superhuman action

Naru's signature technique, the Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt; his charge through an army of ten thousand; and Commodus tearing down temple pillars with his bare hands are not scenes that depend on realistic reproduction. They depend on heightened physicality, visual rhythm, and genre pleasure. Animation can make this scale feel intentional rather than excessive.

The combat of <Musa Manrihaeng> is not just a collision of force. Its appeal comes from differences in movement logic. Naru redirects the power of larger opponents through grappling, swordplay, and pressure-point techniques. Shuja controls space through refined spear work. Commodus destroys the world through raw strength. Because combat style directly expresses character, action sequences can function as both spectacle and characterization.

Selling Point 2. A tragic protagonist whose story deepens every time his vow breaks

Naru must survive in order to save the princess, but he also clings to the idea that he must not become a killer before he finds her. This contradiction is tested throughout Season 1. In front of a fallen comrade, a friend who has become a monster, and a tyrant who must be stopped, Naru loses pieces of the principle that once protected his humanity.

This structure goes beyond revenge. It expands into a universal question: how much of oneself can be destroyed in order to protect the one person one loves? As the scale of the action grows, the damage inside the protagonist grows with it. This gives the series an emotional hook suited to adult action animation.

Selling Point 3. A visual hybrid of ancient Rome and Eastern martial arts

The stone architecture of the Roman Colosseum, the emperor in golden armor, towering siege engines, armored war elephants, and an Eastern warrior in black holding a wooden sword already form a powerful visual concept.

Rome and Gori differ in color, costume, weaponry, architecture, and movement rhythm, giving the animation team a clear basis for visual contrast.

The Colosseum sequences can be designed as large-scale battle spectacles involving crowds, siege towers, beasts, steel-armored elephants, and immortal troops. The Gori flashbacks can provide a contrasting emotional palette, while the palace duel can function as a season-finale set piece: two monsters clashing amid flames and collapsing marble.

Selling Point 4. An ensemble drama with independent arcs beyond the protagonist

Spiros is not a simple traitor; he is a tragic figure who loses fear and guilt after a brain operation. Abidus is a mentor carrying guilt for failing to stop Commodus in the past, and his final act turns his own body into a weapon of atonement. Laetus is a political survivor who moves between loyalty, betrayal, fear, and calculation beside an unpredictable tyrant. Constina is both a clue to Princess Sodan and a young noblewoman caught inside Rome's power structure.

Because each major character carries an independent dramatic arc, the series can expand beyond a single warrior's power fantasy into a layered ensemble drama connecting the arena, palace, senate, and noble society.

4. Media Expansion References

Category	Reference	Relevance
Narrative Strength	<Vinland Saga>	A warrior drama about violence, idealism, and the moral burden of combat. Unlike Thorfinn's movement toward nonviolence, Naru begins with a non-killing vow and is driven toward its collapse.
Tone and Format	<Castlevania>	A useful reference for dark tone, precise action, serialized adult animation, and the combination of Western settings with animation language.
Action and Scale	<Attack on Titan>	Offers points of comparison in overwhelming force imbalance, large-scale survival battles, and the emotional use of comrades' deaths as turning points.
World Texture	<Spartacus>, <Gladiator>	Useful supporting references for slave-gladiator survival, noble decadence, imperial tyranny, and the physical temperature of Colosseum spectacle.

5. Core Character Architecture

Character	Narrative Function	Animation Potential
Naru / Narcissus	A fallen guardian warrior of Gori who survives the Roman arena to find Princess Sodan.	The center of Eastern martial-arts action: grappling, swordplay, pressure points, explosive jumps, and a constant tension between non-killing and overwhelming force.
Commodus	The Roman emperor who believes himself to be the incarnation of Hercules; the final antagonist of Season 1.	Pure physical strength and madness. A mirror image of Naru: another strongest man, but one who has lived in the opposite moral direction.
Spiros	Naru's first friend in Rome; a timid, kind man who becomes a killing machine after losing fear.	A tragic fall caused not by ideology but by medical aftermath. His end creates Naru's deepest emotional wound.
Shuja	Rome's finest technical gladiator and Naru's rival.	Fast, refined spear work that contrasts with Naru's martial rhythm; a key figure for elegant action choreography.
Abidus	The chief instructor of Ludus Magnus and a mentor carrying guilt from the past.	A tragic mentor whose final sacrifice weaponizes his own body against Commodus.
Laetus	The praetorian commander trying to survive beside the emperor's madness.	A palace-politics engine driven by fear, calculation, loyalty, and betrayal.
Constina	Laetus's daughter; the noble girl whose ornament gives Naru evidence that Sodan may still be alive.	A bridge between the arena, Roman nobility, and Naru's original purpose.

6. Season 1 Structure Strategy

Season 1 should cover the entire Roman gladiator arc corresponding to Episodes 0-188 of the original webtoon. The existing 15-phase summary is useful as internal source material, but if presented as-is, each phase is too compressed for an external reader. For proposal purposes, the 15 phases should be reorganized into a clear three-act structure, with the phases placed inside each act as internal episode arcs.

Structure	Relevant Phases	Core Function
Act 1. The Stranger Thrown into the Arena	Phases 1-4	Naru's fall and reawakening, the discovery of Sodan's trace, the rise of Narcissus, team formation, and the acquisition of semi-freedom.
Act 2. The Reenactment of Thermopylae	Phases 5-11	Memories of Gori's war, Spiros' transformation, the failed coup, a survival war of 15 against 10,000, and the collapse of the non-killing vow.
Act 3. The Ludus Tournament and the Emperor's Fall	Phases 12-15	Tournament preliminaries, Spiros' death, the main round with Shuja, Abidus' sacrifice, the palace duel with Commodus, and a bridge into the search for Sodan.

Format Recommendation

This proposal does not lock the project into a fixed episode count. However, given the density of the original Season 1 arc, a 16-24 episode long-form season or a split-season structure would likely serve the story better than an 8-12 episode compression.

7. Detailed Season 1 Synopsis

The following synopsis restructures the phase-based source material into an external proposal format. It follows a four-part dramatic flow while clarifying how each incident causes the next.

Beginning. A warrior waiting for death finds the princess's trace

Naru, once the guardian warrior of the fallen kingdom of Gori, has lost his homeland and failed to protect Princess Sodan. Carried all the way to Rome, he becomes a slave gladiator with no name, no status, and no reason to live. At Ludus Magnus, even under the whip of the chief instructor Abidus and amid the screams of other trainees, Naru remains silent. He is not a man who cannot fight; he is a man who has lost the reason to fight. The only person who approaches him is Spiros, a timid but kind fellow trainee who speaks to him, shares food, and tries to pull this silent stranger back into the world of the living.

But the Roman arena does not grant a quiet death even to those who have given up. Laetus, commander of the praetorian guard, stages a cruel spectacle to please Emperor Commodus: new trainees are thrown to a giant crocodile. As men are torn apart and Spiros is nearly killed, Naru finally moves. He snatches a sword, leaps into the air, and kills the beast in a single strike. The crowd roars, and Laetus recognizes the value of Naru's hidden power. Naru changes from a slave waiting to die into a dangerous commodity Rome wants to exploit.

The true turning point comes when Naru rescues Laetus's daughter, Constina. After Constina falls into a lion pit while secretly exploring the training grounds, Naru jumps in barehanded and saves her. In that moment, he notices an ornament on her wrist. It is the norigae once owned by Princess Sodan. Naru forces Constina to explain where it came from and learns that the servant who gave it to her was alive only months earlier. The possibility that Sodan may still be alive gives Naru a reason to live again. To find her, he needs freedom. In Rome, the only realistic path for a slave gladiator is victory in the Ludus Tournament hosted by the emperor.

Naru receives a Roman name: Narcissus. He enters the arena alongside Spiros, but chooses a wooden sword instead of a blade. He overwhelms his opponents yet refuses to kill them. This refusal is not stubbornness for its own sake. It is the last line of pride he keeps until he can stand before Sodan again without having become a butcher. But Rome does not understand a victory that leaves the defeated alive. The crowd demands death, and the emperor demands blood. In order to save Naru from imperial anger, Spiros executes the losers in his place. From the beginning, Naru's non-killing vow is built on an irony: if he refuses to dirty his own hands, someone else may have to do it for him.

Development. The hero of the Colosseum becomes the emperor's prey

The true star of the festival is Emperor Commodus. Calling himself the incarnation of Hercules, he steps into the arena and beats starving lions to death with a club, bathing in their blood. Naru realizes that Commodus is not merely a mad ruler; he is a monster whose strength may surpass even the generals of Gori. Commodus, in turn, becomes fascinated with Naru. To the emperor, Naru is not yet an opponent to kill, but a rare ingredient to be raised, tested, and eventually consumed in the grandest fight of all.

Abidus knows that the emperor's attention is a death sentence, so he warns Naru to hide his strength. But Naru cannot afford to move slowly. He must rise through the ranks as quickly as possible in order to find Sodan. In an unfair match against eight gladiators at once, he ignores the warning and reveals his power through the Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt, defeating them all in an instant. The arena falls silent before it erupts. Naru becomes a star. For Abidus, however, this is despair: Naru has shone too brightly, too soon.

As Naru rises, the dangers around him multiply. Commodus marks him as a future rival and introduces Shuja, Rome's finest technical gladiator, as a counterweight. Meanwhile, Spiros faces his own trial in a southern expedition match against the armored giant Decius. Desperate, Spiros begs Naru for help, and Naru calls him a friend. For one week, he teaches Spiros the martial logic of Gori: how to throw, choke, and use an opponent's

weight against him. In the match, Spiros discards his weapons and defeats the giant through technique rather than strength. The defeated Decius is impressed by Naru and Abidus, and eventually joins them. The team of Naru, Spiros, and Decius is formed.

Their next major conflict is a proxy duel between nobles, with Constina's future and aristocratic pride at stake. The reward is not full freedom but semi-freedom - the right to live outside and commute to the training grounds. For Naru, this is his first real chance to search the city for Sodan's trail. But every victory in Rome stands on someone else's ruin. Shuja wins the first bout by coldly impaling his opponent. In the second, Spiros suffers a devastating head injury while protecting Decius. Constina's pleading spares him from execution, but his life hangs by a thread. In the final bout, enraged by his friend's blood yet still refusing to kill, Naru defeats every opponent with two broken pieces of his wooden sword. Commodus recognizes his authority over life and death and allows him the right not to kill.

Outside the arena, Naru sees the price of victory. The defeated noble family is ruined, stripped of status, and enslaved. Laetus even severs the tendons of the children's ankles, mocking them to crawl back up from slavery if they can. Naru realizes that his semi-freedom has been purchased with another family's destruction. At the same time, Spiros survives a trepanation procedure performed by an eccentric doctor, but his eyes are no longer the same. Something inside the friend who returned from death has begun to disappear.

Turn. Thermopylae is reenacted, and the non-killing vow collapses

Bored with ordinary spectacles, Commodus demands something grander. Laetus proposes a reenactment of the Battle of Thermopylae: 15 gladiators against 10,000 slave soldiers over three days. Naru is assigned the role of Leonidas. Although the gladiators receive 50 days of preparation and unlimited resources, the event is essentially a public execution. For Naru, this is not merely a match. It drags him back to the memory of Gori's fall, when he once faced an army of ten thousand in his own homeland. Back then, he chose to pursue Sodan rather than rebuild the kingdom. That choice was love, but it also meant abandoning a country and comrades. The reenactment forces that guilt back onto the arena floor.

During a brief leave before the battle, Naru, Spiros, and Decius enter the city of Rome and are pulled into Constina's kidnapping. Naru defeats the fixer Croton and spares him once he admits defeat. This mercy represents the minimum line Naru still tries to keep. Spiros, however, arrives afterward and slaughters the remaining men without hesitation. The operation that saved his life has removed not only fear but also guilt. Naru sees that his friend has become a dangerous variable. Abidus tries to correct Spiros by ordering Shuja to teach him fear through brutal training, but Spiros does not learn fear. He absorbs Shuja's killing techniques instead. The friend has survived, but his humanity is disappearing.

At the same time, palace politics move toward catastrophe. Laetus cooperates with senators in a staged rebellion designed to strengthen his image as a loyal protector while eliminating enemies. Yet when Commodus is lured into a temple and surrounded, he reveals a strength beyond human calculation. Declaring himself Samson, he tears down the temple pillars with his bare hands and crushes the rebels beneath the collapsing structure. When everyone expects him dead, Commodus walks through a marble wall, alive and laughing. Laetus realizes that the ruler he serves is not a manageable tyrant but a disaster wearing a human face.

The Thermopylae spectacle begins. In the first round, 15 gladiators face 1,000 slave soldiers and a siege tower. The victory condition is for one person to reach the top of the tower. The rule is designed to tempt betrayal: one man can save himself while the others die below. Naru instead aims for total survival. He changes the problem by deciding not to climb the tower, but to bring it down. While he holds back the enemy wave, Shuja and the others break the supports. All 15 survive by standing on the fallen remains, arguing that the wreckage is still part of the tower. Commodus accepts the victory, then immediately orders the surviving defeated prisoners to be massacred. Naru's success is washed in blood by imperial whim.

The second round unleashes beasts and a steel-armored war elephant. Naru steps to the front alone, cutting through waves of animals and then bringing down the elephant through cooperation with Shuja. But the more the battle advances, the more openly Rome reveals its appetite for death. In the third round, the immortal troops called Athanatoi and a fire attack engulf the gladiators. Decius dies horribly while protecting his comrades. In front of that death, Naru's non-killing vow can no longer hold. He breaks it and awakens as a true warrior. Spiros also reveals his full brutality, tearing through enemies without remorse. The survivors are not simply victors; they are people broken in different ways. Thermopylae proves Naru's heroism while destroying the principle he tried hardest to preserve.

Conclusion. A friend's heart, a mentor's sacrifice, and the sword that kills a god

After Thermopylae, the Ludus Tournament begins. The preliminaries are a battle royale in which 500 gladiators kill one another for 60 rings. Naru still tries to preserve some measure of martial dignity, but Spiros now uses betrayal and dirty tactics without hesitation. Abidus also enters in disguise. Haunted by the loss of his disciples and by his past failure to stop Commodus, he decides to kill the emperor himself. Through a manipulated bracket, Naru, Shuja, Spiros, and Abidus all advance to the main round. Every relationship built across the season is drawn into one arena.

The most painful confrontation does not come first from the emperor, but from Naru's friend. Scheduled as Commodus's first opponent, Spiros cannot overcome terror and seeks survival by trying to kill Naru. Naru faces the man who was once his first friend in Rome and is now a monster. Spiros knows he cannot return to who he was and asks, in effect, to die by Naru's hand. Naru stabs his friend through the heart. This is the second collapse of the non-killing vow and the emotional bottom of Season 1: Naru sends away the only friend he found in the Roman hell.

In the main round, Naru faces Shuja. Their duel is not a simple contest of strength but a clash of technique, pride, and martial identity. Naru defeats Shuja without killing him by using pressure-point techniques to place him in a suspended state. This shows that a final line still remains within him. Then Abidus removes his helmet and reveals himself. He declares rebellion against the empire and challenges Commodus. Although physically outmatched, he turns his own body into bait and succeeds in injecting the emperor with the poisonous blood of Hydra. Abidus dies, and Commodus collapses. The only doctor who knows the antidote takes his own life out of loyalty to Abidus, throwing Rome into temporary chaos.

Commodus, however, does not die. He rises beyond ordinary human limits, purges those who betrayed him, and drives Laetus into a corner. Desperate, Laetus offers Naru the location of Princess Sodan in exchange for assassinating the emperor. In Laetus's treasury, Naru finds the legendary Eastern twin swords Ganjiang and Moye and chooses them as his final weapons. On a storming night, Naru infiltrates the palace. Commodus has been waiting. To the emperor, Naru is his only true friend - the only person capable of killing him and ending the loneliness of absolute strength.

Under the burning palace, the final duel begins. Commodus breaks the world through overwhelming strength; Naru redirects, pierces, and survives through the martial arts of Gori. The fight is at once an emperor versus a slave gladiator, raw power versus technique, and a ruined man versus another ruined man who still fights to save someone. Naru cuts Commodus's arm and drives a sword through his abdomen, but collapsing marble separates them. Naru receives a parchment from Laetus containing the route back toward his homeland and leaves the palace. Commodus rises once more from the rubble, but refuses to be killed by nameless soldiers. Believing that only Naru has the right to cut him down, he dies standing after being struck by lightning.

After the emperor's death, Rome falls into a power vacuum. Laetus loses his sanity, and the empire begins to fracture around the question of succession. Naru leaves Rome with a ruined body and a restored purpose. He is no longer merely the gladiator Narcissus. He becomes Naru of Gori again, riding into the darkness to find Princess

Sodan. Season 1 closes the Roman gladiator arc while clearly reopening the original quest. The search for the princess becomes the bridge into Season 2.

8. Animation Development Direction

1) Priority Sequences for Visual Development

Priority	Core Sequence	Development Purpose
1	Crocodile execution / first awakening	Establish Naru's hidden power and Rome's cruelty in one scene.
2	Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt / eight-on-one match	Define Naru's signature action identity.
3	Thermopylae siege-tower round	Show large-scale battle, tactical inversion, and the goal of saving everyone.
4	Spiros's death	Deliver an emotional climax where the drama matters more than the action.
5	Palace duel	Season 1 finale: the final collision of Rome and Eastern martial arts, flame and marble, raw strength and technique.

2) Pilot / Look Development Proposal

Rather than designing the full season immediately, the first development stage should produce a 3-5 minute pilot or look-development video that verifies the project's animation potential. The pilot should include at least two of the following: Naru's Eastern martial-arts movement, the physical scale of the Roman arena, and the overwhelming presence of Commodus.

- Pilot A: The crocodile execution - the moment a man waiting for death moves for the first time.
- Pilot B: Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt - a compressed display of Naru's signature action through an eight-on-one battle.
- Pilot C: The palace duel - a tone-defining confrontation between Naru and Commodus for adult action animation positioning.

3) Season Expansion Direction

Season 1 completes the Roman gladiator arc. It begins with the discovery of Sodan's trace and moves through semi-freedom, Thermopylae, the Ludus Tournament, and the final confrontation with Commodus. At the same time, the ending clearly opens Season 2 by returning Naru to the original purpose of finding the princess.

Therefore, development can separate the series into two clear engines: Season 1 as the Roman arena survival and emperor-confrontation arc, and Season 2 as the search for Princess Sodan and the expansion into new regions. This structure gives each season closure while preserving the long-term expansion potential of the original webtoon.

9. Proposal Summary

Final Proposal

<Musa Manrihaeng> combines proven webtoon IP performance with elements that strongly suit animation: superhuman action, a dark protagonist arc, and a rare visual collision between Rome and Eastern martial arts. The core of this proposal is not a specific production technique, but the development of an animation series that can most effectively express the action and tragedy of the original work.

Key Takeaways

- The original webtoon is a proven long-running IP in NAVER WEBTOON's martial arts / historical genre, with both critical recognition and overseas distribution experience.
- Season 1 can cover the full Roman gladiator arc corresponding to Episodes 0-188 of the original work.
- For external proposal use, the existing 15-phase source structure should be presented through a three-act season architecture for clearer comprehension.
- The value of animation lies not in replacing live action, but in translating superhuman combat and tragic emotional escalation into genre language.
- A pilot or look-development piece should focus on one of three strong sequences: the crocodile execution, Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt, or the palace duel.

Items for Follow-up Discussion

Item	Discussion Point
Rights Scope	Animation development, production, distribution rights; territory; term; and secondary exploitation conditions.
Development Format	TV / OTT series, feature-length special, pilot video, or pitch package.
Season Structure	16-24 episode long-form season, split-season format, or compressed core-arc structure.
Pilot Scope	Selection among crocodile execution, Dragon-Rise Thunderbolt, or palace duel.
Visual Direction	Art tone for Rome, Gori, the arena, and the palace; combat choreography standards; character design direction.
Business Structure	Co-development, production investment, distribution partnership, or global pitching package.

Recommended Next Steps

- Step 1: Select core Season 1 chapters and battle sequences for animation adaptation candidates.
- Step 2: Create look-development materials defining each character's combat style and the art direction for Rome and Gori.
- Step 3: Produce a 3-5 minute pilot or storyboard-style previs to test action tone and production difficulty.
- Step 4: Build a pitching package for co-development, investment, or distribution discussions based on pilot response and budget estimates.