Written by Bob Suggs
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Andy Whitfield, the Australian star of the Starz drama series "Spartacus: Blood and Sand" is dead at 39 after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.

Whitfield was preparing for a second season of the Starz series when he was diagnosed with the disease 18 months ago.

His acting talents were so strong in the first season of the show that once he made the announcement, the network opted to shoot a prequel, "Spartacus: Gods of the Arena," and season two of the original was stalled for a year in order to try and get Whitfield on board.

Unfortunately, Whitifeld did not make it.

"On a beautiful sunny Sydney spring morning, surrounded by his family, in the arms of his loving wife, our beautiful young warrior Andy Whitfield lost his 18 month battle with lymphoma cancer. He passed peacefully surrounded by love. Thank you to all his fans whose love and support have help carry him to this point. He will be remembered as the inspiring, courageous and gentle man, father and husband he was," said Whitfield's wide Vashti said in a release..

Starz President and CEO Chris Albrecht released a statement Sunday night about Whitfield's passing.

"We were fortunate to have worked with Andy in 'Spartacus' and came to know that the man who played a champion onscreen was also a champion in his own life," Albrecht said.