



Foreign Bodies: A mystery set in Ancient Rome (A Marcus Corvinus mystery)

By David Wishart

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Ancient Roman sleuth Marcus Corvinus is despatched to Gaul on a personal mission for the emperor.

June, AD 42. The emperor Claudius himself has requested Corvinus's help in investigating the murder of a Gallic wine merchant, stabbed to death as he was taking an afternoon nap in his summer-house at Lugdunum.

Not especially happy at being despatched to Gaul, and even less enamoured of his enforced travelling companion, the insufferable Domitius Crinas, Corvinus is increasingly frustrated as it becomes clear that the dead man's extended family and friends are hiding something from him. Unused to strange Gallic customs and facing an uphill struggle getting anyone to talk freely to a Roman, Corvinus is convinced that there's more to this murder than meets the eye – but, a stranger in a strange land, how is he going to prove it . . . ?

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Editorial Review

About the Author

David Wishart studied Classics at Edinburgh University and spent several years teaching in schools and at University.

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The end of June can be pretty hot in Rome; plus, of course, at that time of year when old Father Tiber is stripped down to his metaphorical vest and underpants and there's more mud to him at the edges than water the low-lying bits of the city are fairly unpleasant, odour-wise; which is why most people who can manage it up sticks and head for cooler and more salubrious parts. Me, I'm OK with the heat, and so long as you remember to breathe through your mouth when circumstances demand walking around is just this side of bearable. Perilla, now...well, on top of the temperature and olfactory aspects of big city life the lady's always been the more outgoing member of the partnership, and between July and September when things begin to settle down again society's thin on the ground. A good time, then, for touching base with the family – adopted daughter Marilla, her husband Clarus and the grand-sprog, young Marcus – at Castrimoenium in the Alban Hills.

?So that's where we were off to bright and early the next morning, with all the arrangements made barring the finer details of the packing. That's definitely Perilla's department; me, while it's happening I tend to lounge around on the atrium couch with half a jug of wine and let the lady and Bathyllus, our major-domo, get on with things between them.

?Which is what I was doing when Bathyllus himself oozed in to say that a slave had arrived with a message.

?‘Is that so, now?’ I said. ‘Who from?’

?‘The emperor, sir.’

?Wine splashed, and I sat up straight. ‘You what?’

?‘A personal request.’ Bathyllus's nose had a distinctly elevated tilt to it, and it had nothing to do with the drains: our major-domo is the snob's snob. ‘He would be grateful if you could drop by some time today, at your earliest opportunity.’

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