



SPQR XI: Under Vesuvius

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Things are going well for Decius Caecilius Metellus. He is Praetor Peregrinus. His cases will be those dealing with foreigners, and all of Italy is his province. His first stop is Campania, Italy's most popular resort district. Decius and his wife, Julia, are happy for a change of scenery. But the good times end when, in a town near Vesuvius, a priest's daughter is murdered. Decius must find her killer and keep the mob off a young boy who everyone blames, but who he believes to be innocent.

Decius may have acquired more prestige, but he's also acquired more trouble.

SPQR XI: Under Vesuvius Details

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Georgina Ortiz says

I was supposed to read this book two months ago, but a very disappointing discovery (with the Amazon Kindle version) prevented me from doing so. So I had to order the actual "physical" book from Amazon and wait for, argh, months.

As soon as I started reading the first few pages, I realized one thing (and one thing only): *Under Vesuvius* was worth the wait. Period. Decius (yes the protagonist) is now *praetor peregrinus* in this book, a position with real power (meaning he now has *imperium*, or the power to summon and lead armies at will). One of the many things I like about the SPQR series is how the reader learns about the Ancient Roman public career (i.e. the *cursus honorum* or the path of honor) through the main character. Decius, who belongs to one of Ancient Rome's greatest and most powerful families, started as a very low-ranking official in the series' first book (Decius commanded the night watchmen in the squalid Subura district, looking out for fires and such), then became quaestor (*The Catiline Conspiracy*), senator (*The Sacrilege*), diplomat (*The Temple of the Muses*), Caesar's "secretary" (*Nobody Loves a Centurion*), aedile (*The River God's Vengeance*), then at last, praetor. I feel as if I am one of Decius' clients, monitoring (and looking after) his career, wishing always the best for this very delightful character.

I won't discuss the merits of *Under Vesuvius* anymore, because fans of Decius will know what I'm going to write about. But let me just say that I feel very sad, because the next book I'm going to read will be the second to the last in the (existing) series :(Hurry up hurry up with SPQR XIV, Mr. Roberts. Please. After all, XIII is a very unlucky number, innit?

Stacey says

Decius is now Praetor Peregrinus and finally holds a position with imperium - real power. He has begun his period as praetor in Campania, the popular resort area. This means Decius is dealing with businessmen, not politicians for a change & he remarks a few times how odd it is Caesar & Pompey are never mentioned. The first murder happens shortly after his arrival, the daughter of a priest was killed while bathing & the main suspect is a Numidian slaver's son. This gives Decius all the authority he needs to take over. He thinks the son is innocent. Then the slaver himself is killed. Then a slave girl. The civic dignitaries are in an uproar. Can he solve these murders and prevent a riot?

Decius is at his noble, snoopy best in this murder. He has the help of Hermes & Julia as usual, with cameos from Cicero as well.

Great mystery, lots of twists, told with plenty of details of Roman life at the period and the usual humor.

Denise says

I've read the SPQR books in sequential order up to this book (#11). IMHO, this is the best of the series (so far). A read page turner, it drove me on and on ("Who did it?"). I never even saw it coming. The author writes very tight plots. He introduces all the pertinent characters in the beginning so you don't get lost. He carries the story of the book (before the one you're reading) in a short summary in order to keep the reader

oriented (in case it's been awhile since you've read the previous book). And all the while he's keeping the bigger picture in the background (Pompey, Caesar, Marc Antony, Cleopatra etc) so you know about what time period our hero and his wife (and freedman Hermes) are in. Very enjoyable series that puts readers into Roman politics of the time. I highly recommend these!

Dorothy says

Decius Metellus has risen in the ranks to praetor peregrinus. He's a judge, but he must do his judging outside of Rome and so we find him in Campania. But even in this idyllic place, murder and mystery follow Decius. He must discover the murderer of a priest's daughter and prevent the mob from taking "justice" into their own hands. Once again, Roberts has constructed a very satisfying tale full of details of the daily life of the ancients. He does this so very well - all those facts are woven into the mystery so intricately that one learns without even realizing that one is learning! Maybe the best way to do it...

Maj says

Well, this one was fun. It kept me guessing and it dangled Cicero in front of my eyes (if not fully utilising him) a few times. And my dear Tiro. Cameos, but they counted.

Decius, as a man of power, gravitas and pietas is maturing nicely, and working much better than I would have anticipated, based on his early wild Roman days.

This is a 5/5 in the context of the series, definitely among the best. Obviously, it's hardly a literary masterpiece, but it breaths life into my favourite period of Ancient Rome and it does it brilliantly.

Crazytourists_books says

Αρκετ? συμπαθητικ? βιβλ?ο της σειρ?ς στην οπο?α πρωταγωνιστε? ο Δ?κιος Καικ?λιο Μ?τελος. Αρκετ? τολμηρ? και καλογραμμενο. Κρατ?ει το ενδιαφ?ρον αν και η λ?ση του μυστηρ?ου ?ρχεται αρκετ? απ?τομα στα τελευτα?ο κεφ?λαιο.

Διαβ?ζεται ευχ?ριστα και αυτ? ε?ναι το σημαντικ? για τον συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλ?ο.

Linda Humberstone says

John Maddox Roberts books are always entertaining and interesting and this one is no exception. This is another enjoyable story featuring the Roman detective Decius Metellus who has climbed the cursus honorum to become a judge and is thoroughly enjoying the perks but still cannot resist investigating crimes himself.

Argum says

Decius has been elected to the praetorship from the previous book. He is assigned to foreigners in the Italian

peninsula. He visits Baiae and finds a very relaxed very decadent group of locals. The priest's daughter is killed and a slaver's son is accused. Decius doesn't think he did it so tries to help. He finds dark secrets in the place instead and more soon die. Julia helps and she has crazy girlfriends with her on the trip. As usual you can't solve the mystery suspect wise with information at hand, but you can get the motive straight or different pieces put together. A bit of hand waving, but nothing contradictory in the foundation of the story.

Νεκτ?ριος Καλογ?ρου says

Εξαιρετικ? ιστορ?α με πλοκ? αστυνομικο? μυθιστορ?ματος με φ?ντο τη ρωμα?κ? αυτοκρατορ?α. Γραμμ?νο σε πρ?το πρ?σωπο και αφηγητ? ?ναν αν?τερο δικαστικ? (ξενοδ?κη) που φθ?νει στην π?λη των Βα?ων (αν?κει στην ευρ?τερη περιοχ? της Πομπη?ας), ξετυλ?γει ?να κουβ?ρι σειρ?ς δολοφονι?ν που στο τ?λος ?λες μαζ? δ?νουν σ' ?να απολ?τως ικανοποιητικ? τ?λος. Εχει πρ?σωπα - πρωταγωνιστ?ς που ε?κολα αγκαλι?ζουν το αντρικ? και το γυναικε?ο αναγνωστικ? κοιν?. Ολα αυτ? συνδεδεμ?να με εικ?νες μιας ?λλης εποχ?ς.

paolo says

Is a pleasure read Maddox. Well written nice plot.

Lily says

I am so sad this series is ending in only two more books. The characters are old friends. If you like the Marcus Didius Falco books, give this series a try. It's not as overtly funny as Lindsay Davis' books, but really well done.

Lance McMurchy says

For me this is the best book in the series that I have read so far. The book has hummer, twists and intrigue. And, for a small book of just under 200 pages, it packs a punch. As well as quality of the mystery itself, the book does well in comparing the life in Rome with that of rich Bay of Naples. When I had finished the book, it left me chucking with a smirk on my face. This is a great read, and not just for those who like Roman based literature.

Ian says

Decius cannot seem to go a day without finding a body, in the idyllic, Italian resort town of Baiae, where as the foreign praetor, he must hold court and dispense justice.

A beautiful, prominent, and much sort after young lady is murdered. The seemingly guilty young man, who was one of her suitors, seems, to the experienced eyes of Decius the younger, to not be the guilty party. A complex investigation ensues, which uncovers a great deal of social deception, economic intrigue, and corruption amongst the powerful. The usual.

The young man was not murderer, rather his stepmother did the deed, for the obvious reasons. Inheritance. A fact obvious in hindsight, and after being revealed by our diligent investigator.

Christopher Taylor says

Another fine addition to a solid, entertaining, and informative Roman era mystery series. Decius is at the height of his power, right before Caesar takes over. His job is to oversee areas outside Rome in the Italian peninsula, particularly acting as a magistrate. Naturally, everywhere he goes is plagued with particularly challenging troubles.

This particular mystery wasn't the most cryptic of the series but did a nice job of peeling back the decadence and corruption under Rome's fairly civilized exterior. There are more interesting bits of culture and history revealed, and this time he's in Baiae (now mostly underwater) and Vesuvius is making rumbles hinting at future disaster. He is not in the area when it finally erupts in 79 AD (the story is set in 50 BC).

There are minor quibbles with historical terms (courtyard is used a couple times, the proper term is 'atrium') but they do not detract from the overall entertainment.

Norma says

"like a vacation with duty hours"

A pleasant duty round as Praetor in Campania erupts into violence when a young girl is found murdered and her admirer is accused of the killing. But Decius Caecilius Metellus the younger believes him innocent and hopes to save the youth from the death sentence he himself will otherwise have to proclaim. As possible witnesses also start to disappear or die, finding the needed proof becomes almost impossible. Twists and turns set in a debauched society even by Roman standards all told with deliciously dry humour and, as usual, nicely narrated by John Lee. Delicious
