

Roman Blood: A Novel of Ancient Rome (Novels of Ancient Rome)

By Steven Saylor



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In the unseasonable heat of a spring morning in 80 B.C., Gordianus the Finder is summoned to the house of Cicero, a young advocate staking his reputation on a case involving the savage murder of the wealthy, sybaritic Sextus Roscius. Charged with the murder is Sextus's son, greed being the apparent motive. The punishment, rooted deep in Roman tradition, is horrific beyond imagining.

The case becomes a political nightmare when Gordianus's investigation takes him through the city's raucous, pungent streets and deep into rural Umbria. Now, one man's fate may threaten the very leaders of Rome itself.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

From the arrival of an articulate slave on the doorstep of sleuth Gordianus to the riveting re-creation of an actual oration by Cicero, Saylor's remarkable first novel takes the reader deep into the political, legal and family arenas of ancient Rome, providing a stirring blend of history and mystery, well seasoned with conspiracy, passion and intrigue. In the steamy spring of 80 B.C. fledgling orator Cicero is preparing the legal defense of Sextus Roscius, a wealthy farmer accused of the murder of his father. Things look grim for Sextus; it is well-known that his father had threatened to disinherit him in favor of his younger half-brother. Cicero engages Gordianus to get at the truth of the matter, and while the orator practices powerful speech-making the investigator proves the aptness of his sobriquet, "the finder." Gordianus soon discovers that truth and mortal danger walk hand-in-hand through the twisting streets and the great forum of Rome. But he is unflinching in his quest for veritas in a story greatly enhanced by its vivid characters, including Cicero's clever slave Tiro; a mute street urchin and his widowed mother; a beautiful, enigmatic whore; Gordianus's spirited slave and lover, Bethesda; the aging dictator Sulla; and a dyspeptic but brilliant Cicero. A classic historical mystery, in every sense.

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From Kirkus Reviews

From the papers of Marcus Tullius Cicero comes this first novel, a fictionalization of the immortal Roman orator's first important case--his defense of well-heeled farmer Sextus Roscius on the charge of killing his hated father. The narrator is Gordianus the Finder, hired by Cicero to dig up evidence, and so good at his job that he soon learns the pretext that lured the elder Roscius to his death--a summons from Elena, a young prostitute pregnant with a possible heir; finds where the murder was committed; unearths two witnesses who set him on the track of a brutal conspiracy; and uncovers some sordid truths about the Roscius family in time for Cicero to set off the expected courtroom fireworks. More genuine mystery and detection than in Ron Burns's *Roman Nights* (see above), with two handsome surprises saved for last. -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"Gripping...a combination of Hitchcock-style suspense and vivid historical detail." ?*Pittsburgh-Post-Gazette on Roman Blood*

"Gordinaus has wisdom and prudence; Saylor has intelligence, wit, and insight. Saylor has aquired the information of a historian but he enjoys the gifts of a born novelist." ?*The Boston Globe on A Murder on the Appian Way*

"Engrossing...contains all the elements that an entertaining mystery and also provides a view of life in ancient Rome. Highly recommended." ?*Booklist on Roman Blood*

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