



Nemesis

Lindsey Davis

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In the high summer of 77AD, Roman informer Marcus Didius Falco is beset by personal problems. Newly bereaved and facing unexpected upheavals in his life, it is a relief for him to consider someone else's misfortunes. A middle-aged couple who supplied statues to his father, Geminus, have disappeared in mysterious circumstances. They had an old feud with a bunch of notorious freedmen, the Claudii, who live rough in the pestilential Pontine Marshes, terrorising the neighbourhood.

When a mutilated corpse turns up near Rome, Falco and his vigiles friend Petronius investigate, even though it means travelling in the dread marshes. But just as they are making progress, the Chief Spy, Anacrites, snatches their case away from them. As his rivalry with Falco escalates, he makes false overtures of friendship, but fails to cover up the fact that the violent Claudii have acquired corrupt protection at the highest level. Making further enquiries after they have been warned off can only be dangerous - but when did that stop Falco and Petronius?

Egged on by the slippery bureaucrats who hate Anacrites, the dogged friends dig deeper while a psychotic killer keeps taking more victims, and the shocking truth creeps closer and closer to home...

Nemesis Details

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Emmanuel Gustin says

In recent years it felt as if this entertaining series of historical detectives was tapering off slowly, as Falco's travels to various historical spots in the Empire were insufficient compensation for plot patterns that became a bit stale. Happily, *Nemesis* breaks that trend. Again set in Rome, this regains the gripping quality of earlier works. It is also one of the darkest books in the series, as Davis engages Falco in activities that might cost him the sympathy and understanding of the reader, as well as his wife.

Dorothy says

I love fiction set in ancient Rome and when it is a mystery, my favorite genre, so much the better. The Marcus Didius Falco series by Lindsey Davis is one of my favorites of the type. I've read them all and now I've read this latest one.

I have to say it was not my favorite of the lot, but it was very good, very entertaining and kept me guessing, although I did have a glimmer of the solution about two-thirds of the way through.

The book starts with a double tragedy. Falco loses two family members in one day and the losses change his life forever. While he is working through his bereavement, he is presented with the mystery of the disappearance of a couple who had been supplying his antique dealer and auctioneer father with statuary. A shipment was delivered but when payment was attempted the suppliers could not be found. Soon Falco is on the trail of the disappeared pair and that leads him into confrontation with a notorious and violent family. A family which may very well be involved in mass murder.

Falco's vigiles friend, Petronius, becomes involved when a murdered and desecrated body is found. The body turns out to be the man who was supplying the statuary, but as Petronius and Falco investigate this turn of events, the case is abruptly stolen from their jurisdiction by their old nemesis Anacrites. Of course, when did that ever stop this doughty and stubborn pair?

The case gets curiouser and curiouser and Falco's extended family becomes involved in its pursuit. But the faithful Lindsey Davis reader can be assured that all will come right for our heroes in the end.

Davis really has the knack of putting her readers right in the middle of ancient Rome. One can almost smell the streets as one strolls through one of her stories. I like the historical detail and the way that she has of showing that the ancient Romans were really no different from us. Some have complained that she sometimes puts modern terms in the mouths of her characters (e.g., "Have they lawyered up?") but that doesn't bother me. I just assume that this is a modern translation of Falco's memoirs.

Carey Combe says

Would have been a two as I reckon she is running out of decent story lines, but they are such fun books with well-loved characters who I have got to know so well and the writing isn't bad I moved it up. But I wish she would stop saying things along the lines of "if we had known what we were getting into" all the time to try and build suspense, lazy and formulaic.

Barb in Maryland says

Oh wow and how! Davis really packs it into this book. The teaser blurbs make the book seem more depressing that it really is. Not quite a spoiler--but for those who were worried, as I was--Helena is okay. Nope-Davis does not kill off Helena. But several other people bite the dust during this one and that doesn't include the numerous crime victims.

This book actually reads like the end of the series. A goodly number of long-running story arcs are wrapped up. If it all ends with this one, I will be satisfied.

On the other hand--with the boards cleared, Davis is free to send Falco and Co off on other adventures. She has another couple of historical years to play with. (When Vespasian's second son, Domitian, becomes Emperor in 81 AD, he decides to wipe out the informers-fatally!in the arena! Not the fate we want for Falco!!)

Anyway you look at it, this is one of the stronger entries in this long-running series. And the ending is a real corker!

Prima Seadiva says

I have read two other of this series quite some time ago. They were okay enough to make me try this. I listened to it as an audiobook. It was still so directionless and boring by midway that I gave it up. Listening before bed, sometimes you do have to say "where did I fall asleep?" and pick up from there. This was so dull I could never remember at what point I fell into the arms of Morpheus which is perhaps better than Nemesis anyway.

Monica says

Although I'm generally restricted to audiobooks and readalouds for Dad these days because of my commitment to Kirkus, I managed to get a whole month ahead on my Kirkus books, so I carved out some time to read one of **my** books. It has been more than a year and a half since my last foray into ancient Rome with Marcus Didius Falco, so naturally, this was the first on my list.

This is certainly the darkest Falco book since *Two for the Lions*, in fact, the darkest in the series. It begins with a double tragedy for the Falco family, then the pursuit of a serial killer and renewed danger from the slimy, jealous, smart and dangerous Imperial Chief Spy, Anacrites. Falco and Petro do some seriously dirty deeds as the book progresses, far beyond their usual rough, tough game.

Yes, there's still the wisecracking cynicism that we all know and love from Falco, but it doesn't gloss over the dark dealings in this book. This series normally is a good balance between comedy, history and detective mystery, but this time it's far more drama than anything else.

Charts new territory for Falco. I have to say that because of the different balance in the book I didn't enjoy this one as much because it's so much less lighthearted than the usual Falco read, but it was just as unputdownable.

One wonders where Davis is heading.

Kasia James says

This is the twentieth novel of this series, and somehow Lindsey Davis manages to keep producing engrossing books! The Roman world is brought to life so vibrantly, and yet with a light hand, so the reader doesn't feel like they are being lectured. The plot is complex, and the characters, as ever, are eminently believable. There are some quite dark parts of this book, which gives a new slant on the lead character, Falco. My only real criticism is that the death of his son, which starts off the story, is not really discussed, nor its effect on Helena, his wife, other than to say she was a bit low. Perhaps this is how things were in a highly patriarchal society with a high infant mortality rate, but I found the description in one of the earlier books, of the effects of a miscarriage, much more believable. Maybe Marcus Didius Falco is just getting harder in his middle years...

Anne says

One of the better installments of the Falco series, to my mind (and they're all good.) I found the portrayals of Falco's and Helena's grief over their baby's loss resonant and true. I'm not surprised that this was written while the author was grieving, but I'm amazed how much of that particular pain of losing a CHILD was so masterfully portrayed by someone who hasn't done it. The plot was one of the darker ones she's written, and brought out a side of Falco and Petro that we don't see as much of in the later books (though it's hinted darkly at more in the earlier books, and to some extent while Petro was off self-destructing after his mob-moll affair.) Overall, a fitting addition to the series and another demonstration of Davis' mastery of writing human characters as well as good mystery plots.

Rachel says

Well this was it - the last book in the Falco series. A series that I read and loved, not so much for the mysteries, but for the characters, I'm going to miss Falco, Helena and their family and friends. Yes, I know I could read the Flavia Albia books but it's just not the same.

Stan Morris says

This is one of the better books in this series. Marcus Didius Falco is an informer (detective) in Rome of 77AD. These Lindsey Davis books are meticulously researched and her tone is so readable that it is dangerous to pick one up late at night if you need to get up early the next day. I would not say that it is easy to begin this series in the middle. I would recommend reading "Silver Pigs" first, and there are many others before this book. The series begins in 69AD just after Vespasian has become Emperor after the year of the four emperors (Vespasian is the fourth). Marcus Didius Falco's social status is very low on the totem pole, but that is about to change.

Here is her website; <http://www.lindseydavis.co.uk/#>

The site is rather slow due to the Java.

Assaph Mehr says

The grand finale to the series, tying up loose ends

Expect a darker than usual Falco novel, as he deals with ancient Rome's version of rednecks and his constant arch-nemesis. This is the last Falco mystery, and Davis was aiming to bring a closure to the series. While most things have been dealt with in a way that can bring satisfaction to the reader, the ending can be a tad frustrating.

Be aware that while it's not necessary to read the books in order, it certainly helps; Falco's family life has evolved throughout the series, and play a big part in describing daily lives and plot points.

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Assaph Mehr, author of [[ASIN:B015TXPPG6 Murder In Absentia: Togas, Daggers, and Magic]] - for lovers of Ancient Rome, Murder Mysteries, and Urban Fantasy.

George says

A Marcus Didius Falco historical mystery novel set in first century AD Rome. It opens in AD 77 Rome with Falco dealing with he and his wife Helena dealing with the deaths of their new born son and Falco's father. He has to deal with both while assuming control of his father's business and various homes, etc. which significantly increases his financial status. As an informer, Roman private investigator, he becomes involved in a series of deaths seemingly connected to a family known for violence living in the marsh area south of Rome. The family has a high up Roman protector. As usual, Falco has difficulties with the emperor's chief spy who doesn't like him. As usual for this series, the story moves along on several levels all working together to produce a good story and a good mystery with humor.

Dee says

I like the Falco books. I like his anti-noir and his realistic grit. I like the pithy style and the sense of humour. I like Helena, and all the ways in which Marcus is extremely human. I like the darkness that comes along with the seedy underside and being this close to it. In all of this I am well-served once again by this book, the twentieth (and last?) in the series.

I have a problem, though, and that's that I have never quite bought into Anacrites as the villain of the piece. I don't like it as a narrative choice (too easy when Marcus could have had to just plain be wrong about disliking him) and I don't like it given that he is a servant of the Emperor (which Marcus dislikes) and a freedman (which Marcus has attitude about) and thus he is delivered as constantly slightly off, when Marcus has been displayed as a slanted and occasionally unreliable narrator. I resisted believing it was true (that Anacrites was off) for all those reasons for a very long time, and for longer still because it just became habit. So I was never going to be satisfied with the way things end up in this book.

Further adventures about Albia would be awesome, though. It would be awesome to get a different

viewpoint - a woman's, and a foreigner's - on Rome.

Alison says

This is one of Davis' darkest books, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The strong investment Davis convinces us to place in her characters - in particular the marriage of Helena Justina and Falco - comes in part because they don't have fantasy or fairytale lives. The tragedies that mix in with their triumphs are part of the reason we root for them, and makes their attempts to build a loving, ethical family core more valuable. The ethics as well as the love at that core are sorely tested in this book, and Davis avoids giving her protagonists easy 21st Century morals as a way to resolve it.

There is a lot of Anacrites in this book, that unusual thing of a character Davis never made work properly. She almost succeeds here - turning the characters inconsistent to silly behaviour into a plot point - but still falls down on making him come to life. The gravitas of the rest, however, makes this less irritating than in other books.

Julie Johnson says

You know a book is good when it finishes and you wish it wasn't done. When you feel sad that is over. When you need time when it done and can't read a new book right away because you are still too emotionally attached to it.

I've read the Falco series since the beginning, so I've been with these characters through many, many books. I love how she develops both great mystery plots and great character plots. To see where the characters have come until now...there's a deep connection. I found this book very poignant that way, to see the turn some of the characters have taken. I got quite emotionally involved and didn't want it to end.

Also, it is just so enjoyable. Falco's perspective on Roman life is witty and lively and it all is vivid, funny, sad--and also so close to home, in that it may be Ancient Rome, but, really, they are very much like us. I always love the connections she makes between 'then and now'. The characters are fantastic! Very real people. The mysteries are also excellent...clever, engaging. Brilliant!

This is one of the best historical, comedic mystery series EVER. A pure pleasure and I highly recommend any Lindsey Davis book. 5 stars each, the lot of them.
