

THE ROMAN MYSTERIES



CAROLINE LAWRENCE
**FROM OSTIA TO
ALEXANDRIA**
WITH
FLAVIA GEMINA

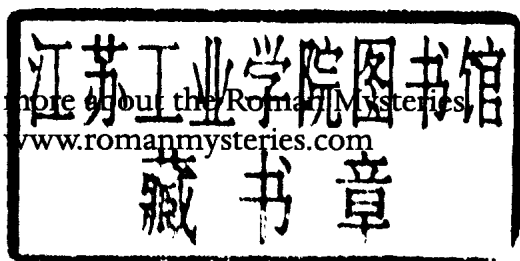
VISIT THE
REAL-LIFE
LOCATIONS OF
THE BESTSELLING
SERIES



— The Roman Mysteries —

FROM OSTIA
TO ALEXANDRIA
WITH FLAVIA GEMINA

To find out more about the Roman Mysteries
visit www.romanmysteries.com



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THE ROMAN MYSTERIES

by Caroline Lawrence

- I The Thieves of Ostia
- II The Secrets of Vesuvius
- III The Pirates of Pompeii
- IV The Assassins of Rome
- V The Dolphins of Laurentum
- VI The Twelve Tasks of Flavia Gemina
- VII The Enemies of Jupiter
- VIII The Gladiators from Capua
- IX The Colossus of Rhodes
- X The Fugitive from Corinth
- XI The Sirens of Surrentum
- XII The Charioteer of Delphi
- XIII The Slave-girl from Jerusalem
- XIV The Beggar of Volubilis
- XV The Scribes from Alexandria

The First Roman Mysteries Quiz Book

The Second Roman Mysteries Quiz Book

The Code of Romulus

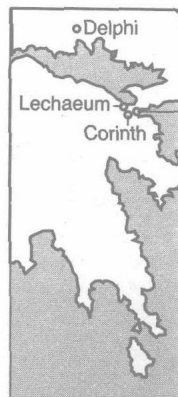
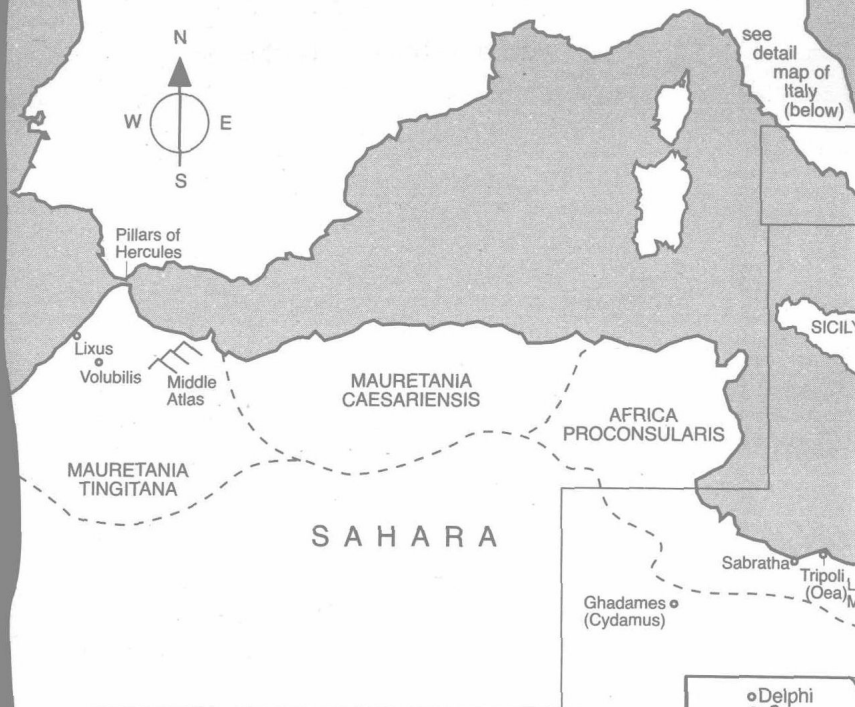
Trimalchio's Feast and Other Mini-Mysteries

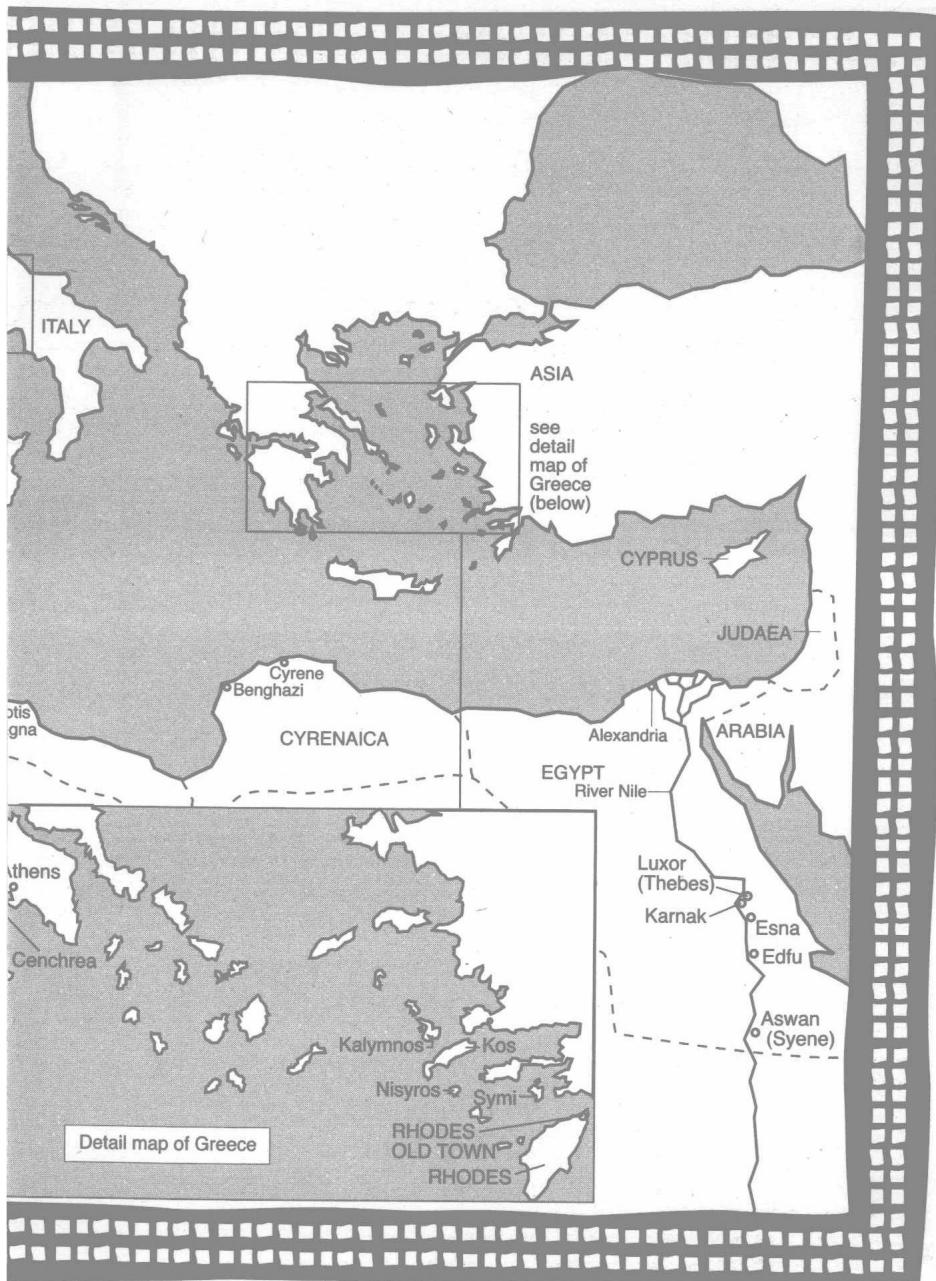
The Roman Mysteries Treasury

The Roman Mysteries Omnibus I

The Roman Mysteries Omnibus II

To my husband Richard
who hardly ever complains





THE ROMAN EMPIRE

INTRODUCTION

If you are between eight and fourteen years old, you might know that I write a detective series for children set in first century Rome. The series is called *The Roman Mysteries* and it features four children who become friends and have adventures during the reign of the Emperor Titus (AD 79-81). Flavia Gemina is a highborn Roman girl, Jonathan ben Mordecai is her Jewish neighbour, Nubia her beautiful slave-girl, and Lupus is a tongueless mute whom they first find living wild in the graveyard outside their home town of Ostia, the port of Rome. Together the four solve mysteries centred around real historical events and people.

Some people think that because I write detective stories I am clever and observant. The reality could not be further from the truth. Because I'm a daydreamer, I forget people's names, can't remember faces, and often fail to notice huge differences in some of my closest friends: things like different hair colour, new glasses and drastic weight loss.

I also have a total block about cars. Except for E-type Jaguars and SmartCars, they all look the same to me. If

the police asked me for the description of a car that caused an accident, I would probably say, 'Um . . . it was silver?'

That's why I admire fictional detectives like Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew and Adrian Monk so much. They really see and remember the details. And that's why I created my own fictional detectives: to be clever.

Flavia Gemina is the sort of person I would like to be. Clever, observant and with a good eye for detail. Her friend Jonathan is literate in the most practical sense: he speaks several languages and knows at least three alphabets. Nubia is intuitive. She senses if something's wrong, even if she can't put her finger on exactly why. And Lupus is good at sneaking, spying, eavesdropping and generally making himself invisible. A good detective needs all these qualities. He or she needs to be observant, literate, intuitive and good at following people around.

Writers of historical fiction are like detectives. We have to recreate the scene of the crime, i.e. the past. Our clues are the ancient artefacts they used. Our witnesses are the writings of people who lived long ago, in my case: two thousand years. Over time, I've discovered a third way of reconstructing the past. By looking for it in different countries.

A famous first line from a book reads: 'The past is a foreign country . . .' I like to switch it around: 'A foreign country is the past . . .' Or it can be, if you know how to look.

In the countries that used to be part of the Roman Empire, some things haven't changed in two thousand years. Wild boar is still on the menu in Rome every year in February; starlings wheel at dusk in October; swifts

return in May and umbrella pines release clouds of yellow pollen in that same month, dusting the SmartCars on the Via Veneto. In the hot summer months, you can sit at a table in the cool shade of an ancient plane tree and eat olives, a taste as old as cold water.

Today's Pompeian farmer digs with the same hoe as his first century ancestor. And his wife uses the same medicinal herbs that Pliny the Elder recommended in his *Natural History*. Inhabitants of the Greek island of Kalymnos bring votive plaques showing the parts of the body they want healed to the sacred grotto of a saint, just as their ancestors once brought clay models of body parts to the healer-god Asklepios. And an afternoon in a Moroccan hammam is probably very similar to a few hours spent in the Baths of Titus two thousand years ago. If you know where to look – if you know *how* to look – the past is visible everywhere.

This is not like any other travel book you will ever find. It will not tell you about exchange rates or which airlines travel to the places mentioned. But it will tell you how to find traces of the past in the places my books are set: Italy, Greece and North Africa. Together we are going to be detectives – like Flavia, Jonathan, Nubia and Lupus – and we will try to solve the question of what it would really have been like to live in the Roman Empire in the first century AD. To do this we are going to have to be observant, literate, intuitive and good at eavesdropping.

I am going to give you assignments and tasks. You might have to try a new type of food, learn a new alphabet and carefully observe the people around you. Most of all, you will have to use your imagination. That's something I am good at. And I'll bet you are, too.

FLAVIA'S TEN TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE WHEN YOU TRAVEL

1. Memorise the name of the hospitium (hotel) where you are staying.
2. Carry a piece of papyrus (paper) with your name and the address of where you are staying.
3. Take a carrier pigeon (mobile phone) to keep in touch with your parents if you are separated.
4. Try out your carrier pigeon (mobile phone) when you first arrive in the new country.
5. Most guidebooks have a few pages about the customs of different countries. (e.g. the thumbs-up sign means 'great' in many countries but in other countries it is rude!) Study these before you go.

6. Be polite, but don't trust anyone you don't know, especially people who invite you to go with them on your own.
7. Be alert! Watch out for suspicious behaviour, especially people following you.
8. If beggars or stallholders pester you, just smile politely and say 'no thank you'.
9. Do not go out without telling your parent or tutor and make sure you get their permission.
10. If you go out on your own, take a bodyguard or dog. (Or a parent or guardian.)

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ITALY



ITALY

Most of the Roman Mysteries take place in Italy: Ostia, Rome and the Bay of Naples to be precise. I try to visit Italy at the time of year when each of my books is set, to get the feel of the place at different seasons. Sometimes I travel with my husband Richard, who does the maps in the books. Some times I travel on my own. The Roman Mysteries set in Italy are *The Thieves of Ostia* (RM I), *The Secrets of Vesuvius* (RM II), *The Pirates of Pompeii* (RM III), *The Assassins of Rome* (RM IV), *The Dolphins of Laurentum* (RM V), *The Twelve Tasks of Flavia Gemina* (RM VI), *The Enemies of Jupiter* (RM VII), *The Gladiators from Capua* (RM VIII), *The Sirens of Surrentum* (XI), *The Charioteer of Delphi* (RM XII) and *The Slave-girl from Jerusalem* (RM XIII).

