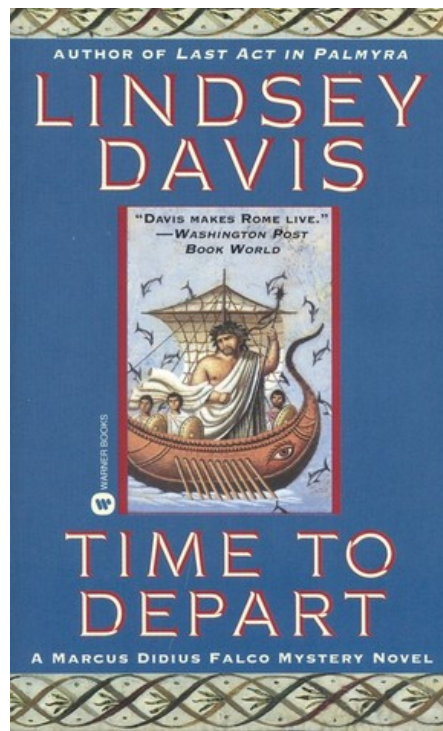




Time to Depart

Lindsey Davis

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Balbinus Pius, the dirtiest underworld organizer in Emperor Vespasian's Rome, has been convicted of a capital crime at last, thanks to public servant Petronius Longus, better known to Marcus Didius Falco as his old army buddy Petro. A quirk of Roman law, however, allows every citizen condemned to death "time to depart." In other words, he has a chance to skip town. Taking full advantage of the law, Balbinus embarks on a ship fit for a king, accompanied by his loyal factotums. From the wharf, Falco and Petro watch Balbinus sail off to exile instead of Hades. And the race is on among his competitors to take over his old operations. It begins with a colossal heist at the Emporium, a major trading center. As Falco tries to stem the escalating crime wave, he faces another task almost as daunting: find a new apartment for himself and the woman he loves, a senator's daughter forbidden by Roman law to a man of Falco's rank. To make matters even more dangerous, Helen believes she's pregnant. Falco's head - along with other body parts - could be on the chopping block if her condition becomes public.

Time to Depart Details

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Deb says

Lindsey Davis does it again! This time Marcus stays in Rome as he investigates a major robbery, but has been asked by Vespasian and Titus to find out whether his best friend's cohort (and by extension, Petronius himself) are on the take. Tensions run high, as the investigation causes a major rift between Marcus and Petro, Marcus's niece is kidnapped, and Helena's pregnancy becomes family knowledge! A friend who is also reading this series and I were talking and we agree that we both really like these novels. However we also agree that they are not light reading. You have to stay alert and focused because of the amount of detail and the subtle humor. Not the best choice for bedtime reading!!

aPriL does feral sometimes says

When Roman courts hand down the sentence of 'Time to Depart' they are in deadly earnest. The sentence is only given to wealthy Romans who have committed crimes so awful either against the State or citizens that if they were not rich and connected they would have been sentenced to strangulation. As it is, if such people ever return and are recognized, it means immediate death.

Balbinus Pius is the undisputed crime boss of Rome. No matter what class of dirty business - pickpockets to burglary to prostitution to kidnapping to murder - Balbinus got his cut. Either he had an investment in the business or he provided men to help do the work or he fenced the stolen goods. Every honest policeman wanted his hide nailed to a wall! So, finally, when he slipped up and he was convicted of a murder because of a snitch's testimony, Marcus Didius Falco's best friend, Petronius Longus, public officer of the Fourth Cohort, was given the honor to force him on a ship heading out of town, since it was due to Petronius' investigation and hard work Balbinus was convicted. That expulsion is a done deed by the end of chapter one in this seventh book in the Falco detective series, witnessed by Falco, so troubles in Rome should have gone away for awhile, too, right?

No, not! A big warehouse is broken into and half of the goods are taken! Amongst the stored goods, are the exotic wares Falco and Helena Justina had brought back with them from their assignment in Syria. Falco's father, an auctioneer, had asked them to buy up household glass and artworks, along with furniture and other products from the Middle East, after they had completed the job the Emperor had had them do (previous book). Now, the things they had bought are gone, and the two lovers had not yet been reimbursed by Falco's slow-paying slightly crooked dad!

When Rome is still reeling from this unusually large burglary, the next night the gold jewelry merchants are robbed! Falco and Petronius are given an imperial commission to find the criminals behind the spree and are awarded the title of special inquiry officers. They know this 'honor' is a two-edged sword, one that will quickly have them disgraced if they do not succeed finding the goods and criminals. Is there a new crime boss?

Making things more interesting, Helena is sick every morning since they arrived back in Rome. Could that one time they skipped the birth control that lovely Syrian night after drinking a lot of wine....nonononono!

This novel in the series is extremely fun, full of laugh-out-loud moments and silliness, while yet including lots of life-threatening drama!

I recommend reading this series in order. Start with .

Judith Johnson says

As ever, highly enjoyable private-eye dish, with a nice side order of police-procedural, served up with extra relish of the customary fascinating information of life in ancient Rome. What more can you ask!

Writerlibrarian says

3 1/2 stars rounded out to 4 stars.

This one is almost a closed room mystery (if you can call a district of Rome a closed room) set in a very define area of Rome. It's the first tale where we learn and see what Petronius does and why he and Marcus are best friend, partners in crime and justice. The plot is intricate and there are a lot of strings tangling but ultimately Marcus, Petro and Helena put it all together.

There are also a very good plot B that involves Marcus' and Helena's families reactions and relationships. That plot is not new and its the very solid ground Davis has built that makes these not just cozy mysteries set in Imperial Rome but slices of life novels with a side of mysteries set in Imperial Rome at the time where Rome was the center of the world. The reader learns how every day life probably was. Children, marriage, law and corruption, family and commerce. Davis wraps her knowledge of Imperial Roman life in a very pretty, easy cozy mystery that are not only fun but educational in a non boring way.

Jamie Collins says

The title is taken from the fact that in AD 72, a Roman citizen who received a death sentence was by law permitted "time to depart" - to accept exile from the empire, a fate worse than death, of course.

When Falco's old friend Petronius, a member of the Vigiles who patrol the streets of Rome, runs a crime boss out of town, he's not prepared to deal with the sudden increase in outrageous crime that immediately follows. Falco is called to use his informer's skills to help discover who's running the new racket. Meanwhile Falco has pressing domestic issues; in particular his ambition to buy his way into the middle rank so that he can marry Helena, the senator's daughter, has just become more urgent.

This is one of my favorites of the series so far. The author has perfected her signature writing style, which was perhaps slightly awkward in the early books. Her dramatic timing is great. The books are action-packed and quietly funny. The author deftly slips in historical details without disturbing the flow of the story; you never once feel as if you're reading a history lecture.

Falco and Helena do a lot of traveling, but I prefer the books that are set in the city of Rome itself. Not only is the scenery great (Falco walks all over the city) but I like the interaction with his friends and family and his encounters with the emperor Vespasian and his sons.

Marcus says

It is with some relief that I am able to report that "Last Act in Palmyra" was only a temporary low watermark for Lindsey Davis. "Time To Depart" takes place shortly after Marcus' return to Rome. It doesn't take long before he's mixed up into the events caused by a sudden vacuum in Rome's organized crime, a vacuum that was created by no other than Marcus' best friend Petronius. Story develops in very clever and logical manner and introduces some rather memorable characters along the way. What's even more important, the writing style of Davis is back on par. Very enjoyable read.

Larry says

This is a pleasantly complex book. Many threads of plot intertwine as Marcus Didius sorts out his various problems. He has difficulties in his relationship with Helena Justina, but by now they are real issues and not just him being stupid. There is drama with various family members, and the broad cast of secondary characters from the previous 6 books in the series. His friendship with his friend Petronius is stretched to the breaking point. All the plot threads are resolved, loose ends are tied up. The beginning and ending of the book are perfect.

Ed says

This series reminds me of Robert B. Parker's "Spenser" series in that Marcus Didius Falco is such a wise guy like Spenser and his best friend, Petronius, is the strong silent type like Hawk.

In this entry, Falco and his live-in Girl friend Helena have just returned to Rome in time for Falco to witness the exile of criminal mastermind Balbinus Pius. Petronius after years of trying finally was able to get Balbinus convicted of murder after which Balbinus was given the choice of death or exile. He chose exile. Soon after he leaves, however, a crime wave hits Rome. It appears someone is trying to take Balbinus' place.

There are numerous sub-plots involving police corruption, sex scandals, power plays, and Helena's pregnancy, an event very unlikely to make her Senatorial family happy. There is also an expanded exploration of Falco's and Petronius' friendship. You would be hard-pressed to find an unlikelier pair.

Davis does a magnificent job of bringing Emperor Vespasian's Rome to life: the dangers of living in Rome, the importance of extended family, the life of an "informer"(P.I.), the power of the Emperor and his family and the strictures of class that keep Falco and Helena from getting married.

Davis' characters sometimes seem more contemporary than Roman but they are also very entertaining. The details she provides of life in 78 AD illustrates the accuracy of her research. The main plot unfolds slowly so that the fascinating sub-plots can be developed. You won't be surprised at the conclusion but you will be satisfied with its logic.

Paul says

I much prefer this stories set in Rome with his family and friends helping and hindering the hero

Assaph Mehr says

Time to Depart sees Falco back in Rome, dealing with the dregs of society - from brothels to the upper crust of gang leaders.

Expect a novel that deals with the criminal element in Imperial Rome, with the usual twists and turns as Davis gets in stride. In addition, Falco personal life with Helena and his friend Petronius gets more exposure throughout.

Be aware that while it's not necessary to read the books in order, it certainly helps - certainly so far into the series.

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Assaph Mehr, author of Murder In Absentia: A story of Togas, Daggers, and Magic - for lovers of Ancient Rome, Murder Mysteries, and Urban Fantasy.

Johanne says

A reread of an old favourite, trying times have had me revisiting comforting (eg this) and or engrossing reads (eg Wolf Hall). I do like this series, the early Falcon novels are light and entertaining reads although the latter ones are darker. So this one has our hero in and out of Roman brothels trying to solve murders linked to a new crime lord. Meanwhile Helena is pregnant, he needs the money to be an equestrian, he has to attend his landlords wedding and act as the priest and find a home for a deaf baby. So as you can imagine it moves quickly whilst casting light on all sorts of aspects of Roman life

Barbra says

A great read, and if you like Roman history this one is for you. This book centers on a quirk of Roman law where every condemned to death citizen "time to depart", in other words he has a chance to skip town. The mystery begins when this "citizen" leaves town and the murders and mayhem begin.

Diana Sandberg says

Still fun. I have come to recognize that Davis's characters are well chosen to go with her period - the Chandleresque ironic idealism suits Imperial Rome very well. She is a master, too, at revealing interesting tidbits about the time without sounding pedagogic. If I ever get back to Italy and see again those ancient fast-food joints preserved from Pompeii and elsewhere, I'll see them with Falco and his cronies haunting their counters, playing draughts and complaining about the food and wine.

Marilag says

I keep telling myself I should probably sleep now, but I figure this needed a review beforehand (plus, I blame the second cup of coffee I had this evening for my lack of sleepiness).

Time to Depart is Number Seven of the Marcus Didius Falco series, so by this point, you're either a dedicated reader and love the series in general or you're starting in media res and don't care about previous volumes (to be honest, even if you don't read the previous volumes, there's enough information in each book that you can consider it a standalone...kind of).

Anyway, in this adventure, Falco has just returned from his eventful trip with a band of actors in Syria, only to be thrown in immediately to help with an organized crime case. Balbinus Pius, the godfather, as it were, has been apprehended and given a "time to depart", where he is exiled out of the Roman Empire. Only, once the leader of organized crime disappears, what's to stop the next man from taking his place? When a string of premeditated thefts and murders surface immediately after Balbinus' exile, it is clear organized crime has found its new leader. Alongside his longtime pal, Petronius Longus, Falco must unravel the mystery behind the murders and stolen goods, the kidnapping and ransoming of children, as well as deal with domestic concerns, such as involuntary babysitting, planning for fatherhood, and divining for the wedding of the decade. Needless to say, Falco is out of the desert and back into the gladiatorial pit that is Ancient Rome.

I've yet to tire over the characters, especially Falco's dysfunctional immediate family, and his family friends. I've also been looking forward to finally seeing Falco and Petro work together (or at least, attempt to), and this book certainly has a lot of that going on. And, of course, I was severely wishing that Falco and Helena would get past the trauma that occurred in Shadows in Bronze, which they did. So all that said, this book delivered in those aspects, and much more.

It was great seeing the interaction between Falco and Petro, and I have to admit I loved the ending of the book because of their camaraderie. Of course, I could be biased, because Petro is probably my second favorite character in the novels. Second to Helena, that is.

Cindy Matthews says

Time to Depart brings Roman sleuth Marcus Didius Falco alive once again for me after a rather slow ride in the last book in the series. Returned to his home town of the seven hills, political corruption, crime, theft, murder, and old friends and family members abound in this story. Falco is hired on to help solve the mystery of who is behind the robbery of an entire marketplace worth of goods after his friend in the vigils, Petro, sends a noted gangster up the river (or rather, gets the crime boss exiled from Roman territory). If Pius isn't the criminal mastermind, who is? Lalage, the brothel keeper, isn't talking, and neither is Pius's bitter wife or vacuous daughter. Add in the domestic troubles of being asked to officiate as a priest at his landlord's wedding (ugh!), discovering a baby thrown in a skip, "adopting" a mutt that follows him about, trying to find his missing niece, and learning that he's about to become a father with his lover Helena Justina, and Falco has more than his hands full. *Time to Depart* is fast paced and full of action, suspense and plenty of characters to keep readers entertained. Well done!
