

For Immediate Release

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WHAT DO A SENATOR AND A SMUTTY POET HAVE IN COMMON?
THEY'RE TRACKING A MURDERER THROUGH THE STREETS AND BEDROOMS OF ROME.

Rome: 96 AD. When the body of Sextus Verpa, a notorious senatorial informer and libertine, is found stabbed to death in his bedroom, suspicion falls on his household slaves—a potential death sentence for them all. The emperor Domitian orders Vice-Prefect Pliny to investigate. However, the Roman Games have just begun and for the next fifteen days the law courts are in recess. If Pliny can't identify the murderer in that time, Verpa's entire slave household will be burned alive in the arena. Plinius teams up with Martial, a starving author of bawdy verses and hanger-on to the city's glitterati. Pooling their talents, they unravel a plot that involves Christian "atheists," worshipers of Isis, sleek courtiers, a vengeful concubine, a child bride, and a paranoid emperor.

Their lips twisted in desperate hilarity, the guests descended, half-stumbling, into the black pit. One elderly senator turned and tried to claw his way up again, but was borne down by the weight of the others. At the foot of the stairs, moved by invisible hands, a door swung inward on screeching hinges.

"Nice dog, Cerberus!" joked someone, but there was no laughter. They were plunged into darkness. Suddenly Pliny could not breathe, and the blood pounded in his temples. Whichever way he turned, other bodies pressed against him. He had no idea where the stairs were...

"Macbain's debut novel convincingly re-creates everyday life in ancient Rome, weaving real and fictional characters with aplomb." *Kirkus*

Bruce Macbain holds degrees in Classics and Ancient History and was formerly an Assistant Professor of Classics at Boston University. He decided to stop writing scholarly articles which almost no one read and turn his expertise to fiction—a much more congenial medium. **Roman Games** is his first published novel. He lives with his wife in Brookline, MA.

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