



The Water Thief

Pastor, Ben (Author)

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PW

In A.D. 304, the historian Aelius Spartianus steps into a conspiracy spanning centuries in Pastor's satisfyingly convoluted historical, which ranges from Egypt to the villas and back alleys of imperial Rome. Researching a biography of the deified Hadrian, Aelius is curious about the drowning death of Antinous, the emperor's favored male consort. The historian learns of a letter from Hadrian, which hints at a plot against the empire, that may be interred with the youth in an unknown grave. A source soon suffers Antinous's watery fate in the Nile, and attempts on Aelius's life quicken. Pastor (Liar Moon) bases her characters, even Aelius, on historical personages and weaves strong threads of contemporary gay culture, Christian suppression and the Jewish revolt into an elaborately detailed canvas. As the search for Antinous's grave narrows, red herrings abound. The shadowy conspiracy against Rome ought to resonate powerfully with readers today.(Mar.)

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