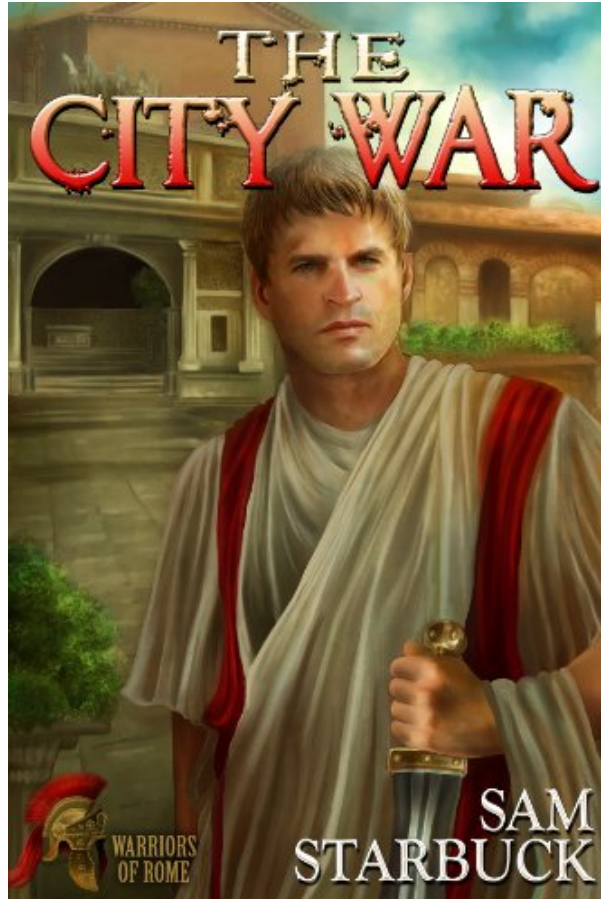
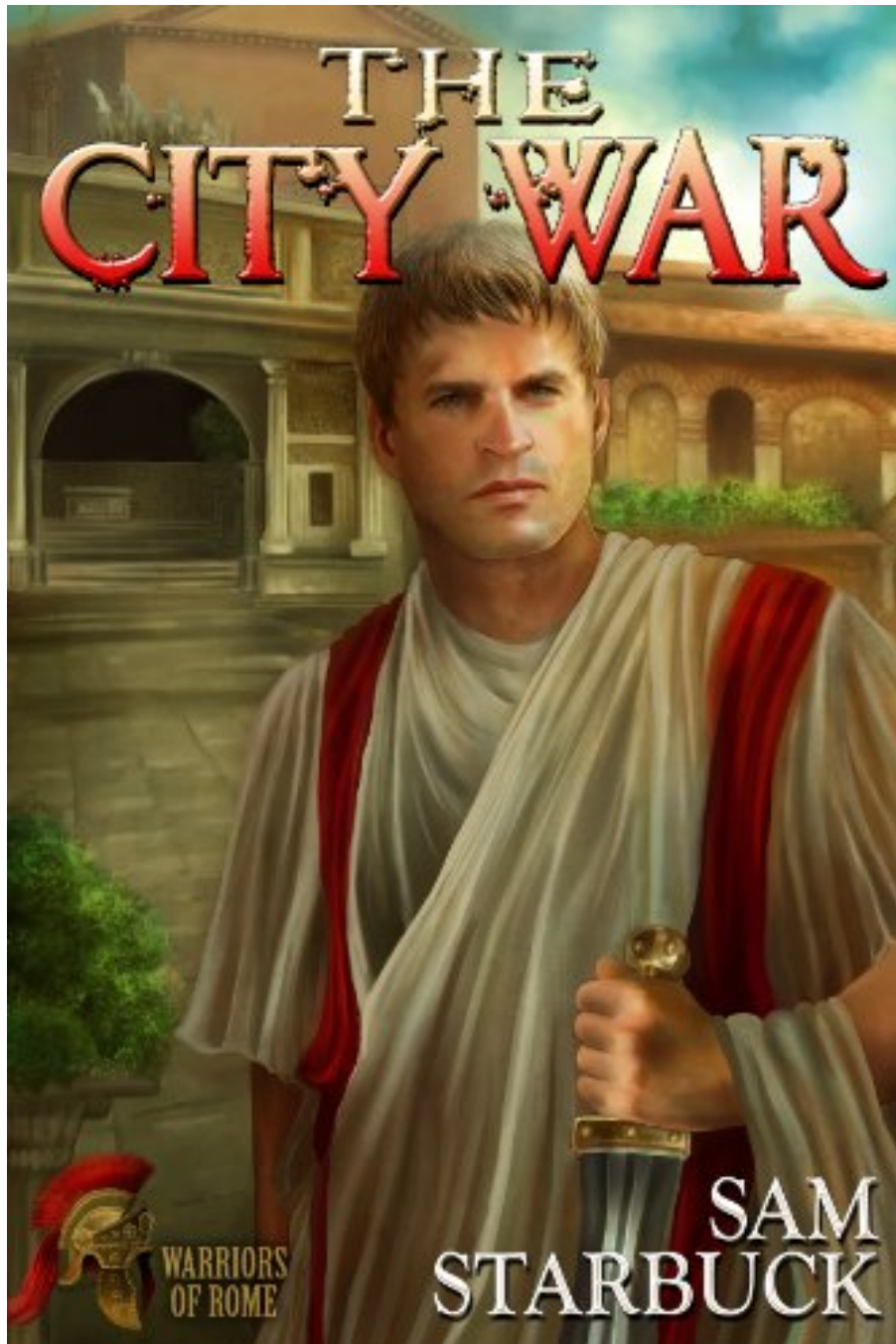


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## A Warriors of Rome Story

Senator Marcus Brutus has spent his life serving Rome, but it's difficult to be a patriot when the Republic, barely recovered from a civil war, is under threat by its own leader. Brutus's one retreat is his country home, where he steals a few precious days now and then with Cassius, his brother-in-law and fellow soldier — and the one he loves above all others. But the sickness at the heart of Rome is spreading, and even Brutus's nights with Cassius can't erase the knowledge that Gaius Julius Caesar is slowly becoming a tyrant.

Cassius fears both Caesar's intentions and Brutus's interest in Tiresias, the villa's newest servant. Tiresias claims to be the orphaned son of a minor noble, but his secrets run deeper, and only Brutus knows them all. Cassius, intent on protecting the Republic and his claim to Brutus, proposes a dangerous conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. After all, if Brutus — loved and respected by all — supports it, it's not murder, just politics.

Now Brutus must return to Rome and choose: not only between Cassius and Tiresias, but between preserving the fragile status quo of Rome and killing a man who would be emperor.

\* \* \* \* \*

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Historically Thought Provoking & Romantic...

By J. Faltys

Sam Starbuck has made history fun in this steamy interpretation of the downfall of Julius Caesar. With its insightful look into characters we only know by name he succeeds in drawing us into this world and feeling compassion for those put into an untenable position.

Where before we found Brutus a bloodthirsty traitor, we now see a conflicted soul. Conflicted as to his ongoing relationship with Cassius as well as being drawn into the assassination plot. We end up feeling sympathetic towards him and relish any moments of happiness he can find. He tries to be an honorable man but gets drawn into a plan that he finds lacks honor.

His relationship with Cassius is one that remains hidden from the public but gets the tacit okay from their wives. The encounters are playful yet sexy and you can sense all the weight of the world being lifted off him

at these moments. Considering how happy he makes Brutus I wish Cassius came off as more likable. He gave the impression of being a jealous child constantly prodding at Brutus to do the bloody deed he's too weak to do. That's why it was nice that Brutus was able to draw comfort from the "transgender" Tiresias. Tiresias gives unwavering support to Brutus at a time when he's doubting everything and everyone. Considering the important part she/he plays in Brutus' life I wish we'd had more insight into the character.

The City War perfectly blends historical and emotional facets into an entertaining and satisfying history lesson. The many names dispersed throughout the story does become a bit overwhelming at times but the vivid and realistic imagery fully immerses the reader into this brief glimpse into Roman life. Sam Starbuck has created an emotional and thought provoking story and I'm greatly intrigued by what he'll create for us readers next.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent LGBT historical novel

By Jules Jones

Roman Senator Marcus Brutus is a patriot, devoted to the Republic. Many of his days are spent actively working for the Republic, protecting the system he believes in. His main respite is the occasional trip to his country villa in the company of his dearest friend, and lover, Cassius. But his tireless work may not be enough, not when the consul Julius Caesar is taking more and more power to himself. When Cassius first proposes a drastic solution, Brutus rejects the idea, but as the months go by, it becomes ever more obvious that given enough time, Caesar will overthrow the Republic and make himself emperor.

I bought this because I love Sam's fanfic, and expected him to do a good job of original fiction drawing on historical fact. I wasn't disappointed. This is one of those novels where I think it can be enjoyed both by readers who know nothing about the historical characters, and by readers familiar with the historical story, or with Shakespeare's play. There's a solid story here that fleshes out the basic facts and brings Brutus to life as a real person, a decent, honorable man faced with a choice between evils. His decision is not a simple one, and is made over the course of months, as more and more evidence accumulates of what Rome's future could be if Caesar is not reined in.

And it's not just Brutus who's brought to life here. There's a good exploration of Cassius and his motives. In addition, there's a brief but lovely portrait of Brutus's wife Porcia, and a marriage that is a loving partnership and friendship, not just a useful front for a gay man. Along with the historical characters, there's original character Tiresius, a teenage runaway taken on by Brutus as a horseboy. Tiresius has secrets to hide, but as Brutus discovers more about the boy's troubled relationship with his father, it provides him with insight into his own troubled relationship with Caesar, a man who may or may not be his biological father. The interactions between the characters create a rich portrait of a situation where there is no easy right and wrong.

One of the problems with writing historical fiction is that historical people could have very different moral values and beliefs, often ones that don't sit well with a modern reader. In trying to make a lead character sympathetic, it's easy to slip into the trap of turning him or her into a twenty-first century person in fancy dress. This book does a superb job of presenting the characters in their proper context, with believable explanations for their attitudes and beliefs about various issues.

It's not a romance, because it follows Marcus Brutus and his relationships with Cassius and others in the months leading up to the assassination of Julius Caesar, and anyone who's familiar with either the history or Shakespeare's play will know that Things Do Not End Well for the conspirators. But well researched as far as I can tell, beautifully written, and I'd recommend it to someone looking for historical fiction with an

LGBT theme.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting take on a familiar event

By Anne M. Kleinginna

Sam Starbuck is an excellent writer with a sensitive touch toward LGBT issues. In this novelette, Brutus and Cassius are lovers faced with Julius Caesar's growing threat to the authority of the Roman Senate. Cassius pushes for his assassination, while Brutus is reluctant to commit murder, even in the interest of Rome. We all know how it ends, but the real story here is the well-told account of the conflict Brutus experiences, and his anguished realization that Caesar must die.

An added complication is the growing relationship between Brutus and his loyal and loving transgendered young servant boy Teresias, who has his own complexities to handle.

Overall, the story is more political than sexual, and the encounters are not described in an overly graphic way, but people who are offended by gay relationships will not enjoy this. I did.

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