

### Book Review

#### ***The Wedding Shroud***

by Elisabeth Storrs

*Pier 9*

The book opens outside ancient Rome. Caecilia grows up as the chattel of first her father and later her uncle. Her uncle, hoping to reinforce an uneasy truce, arranges a marriage for her to an Etruscan nobleman. Elisabeth Storrs makes us completely at home in both of Caecilia's cultures. We learn about austere Roman mores, religious observances, household customs, and the subservient role of Roman women. Then, with Caecilia, we struggle half fascinated and half disgusted in the Etruscan court of her new husband, where decadence and overindulgence are the norm, and where women are involved in commerce and politics. One moment we sympathise with her horror at public lasciviousness, next moment we are irritated by her snobbish reluctance to adapt in even the smallest way to Etruscan customs.

This is an insightful study of a young woman trying to find herself. Her Etruscan husband Vel Mastarna, a warrior with a broken heart, is also skilfully painted. The arc of the story, travelling from Rome to Etruscan Veii and back again, immerses the reader fully in the two cultures and the tension between them. I was reluctant to leave Caecilia's environment in 406 BC, and look forward to revisiting it in the forthcoming sequel.

Review by Crisetta MacLeod

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