



Rome and a Villa (P.S. (Paperback))

Eleanor Clark

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In 1947 a young american woman named Eleanor Clark went to Rome on a Guggenheim fellowship to write a novel. But Rome had its way with her, the novel was abandoned, and what followed was not a novel but a series of sketches of Roman life, most written between 1948 and 1951. This new edition of her now classic book includes an evocative foreword by the eminent translator William Weaver, who was a close friend of the author's and often wandered the city with her during the years she was working on *Rome and a Villa*.

Once in Rome, the foreign writer or artist, over the course of weeks, months, or years, begins to lose ambition, to lose a sense of urgency, to lose even a sense of self. What once seemed all-consuming is swallowed up by Rome; by the pace of life; by the fatalism of the Roman people, to whom everything and nothing matters; by the sheer historic weight and scale of the place. Rome is life itself—messy, random, anarchic, comical one moment, tragic the next, and above all, seductive.

Clark pays special attention to Roman art and architecture. In the book's midsection she looks at Hadrian's Villa—an enormous, unfinished palace—as a metaphor for the city itself: decaying, imperial, shabby, but capable of inducing an overwhelming dreaminess in its visitors. The book's final chapter, written for an updated edition in 1974, is a lovely portrait of the so-called Protestant cemetery where Keats, Shelley, and other foreign notables are buried.

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