

THE AGRICOLA SERIES  
A ROMAN  
AFFAIR

COMPANION STORY TO  
RED FURY RAGE



J. F. RIDGLEY

# A ROMAN AFFAIR

*Short Story to Red Fury Rage*

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JF RIDGLEY

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Short story to *Red Fury Rage*  
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*Dedication to  
Joe  
My best friend*

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTIONS

### *Julia Procilla Valerius*

*I remember that fall day when I fell in love with Gaius Suetonius Paulinus. It was at Tullius Marcus's afternoon party in Rome. I have always loved parties, meeting people, gossiping, and laughing with my friends. Being barely fifteen at the time, my parents absolutely never had a problem getting me to attend any celebration.*

*Once at the party, my girlfriends and I would instantly melt into our small group to feast on whatever the latest gossip was, mostly learned that morning at the baths. Oh, we all could have stayed at home and been pampered in our private baths. But how could we when gossip was so much richer in the public thermae.*

*That particular afternoon, the gossip was overflowing with news about a new senator by the name of Gaius Suetonius Paulinus. We each were giddy to find out if what we had heard was true. And it was true.*

*We swooned the moment Suetonius appeared in the atrium of Tullius' townhouse. He was every bit of a lean, hard, tanned,*

*twenty-five year old senator. Confidence pulsed from him as he greeted everyone. Like a tidal wave, we felt his presence from across the room.*

*An impudent nerve set off between all of us--who was to demand his complete attention? Attempting to maintain a proper appearance of propriety, composure, and friendship, our gazes still dripped with desire. Over our wine goblets, we observed his every move as carefully as any animal on the hunt, watching to see where his first glance fell. It was I who won.*

*We all pretended as if we had seen absolutely nothing, that his intrusion into our midst was purely an invasion. Somehow, I managed to feign indifference as he worked his way toward us. It was difficult to not act as a victor and remain indifferent as if he did not exist. I pretended to be stunned when he joined us, but I most certainly rewarded him with my most apt attention.*

*My friends—or should I say competitors—each continued to gush with suggestions of what tray of food seemed extra tasty. Asked ever important questions of his appointment. Or asked him his thoughts on any upcoming legal cases he may have to deal with. Each hoping I would ultimately lose, of course.*

*Claiming a goblet of wine, Suetonius stood there enduring my friends' efforts to be charming, nodding his ever-so-handsome face. His sandalwood and cedar fragrance instantly floated over me, shutting off any conversation I may have espoused. In other words, I was speechless.*

*As a perfect patrician, he respectfully responded to each plea for his attention, only to have my friends drown in his gleaming brown gaze. I smiled appropriately and resumed my interest in their vain attempts to lure him away. He accepted their benign interests with a tilt of his sensuous lips. It seemed*

*so natural to him since command seemed to draw to him as panther to its prey—me.*

*I remember the thrill of my hand brushing the vibrant green pallium draped over his broad shoulder and entrapped by a modest gold link belt that surrounded his narrow waist. As he talked, I could not help but notice his arms corded from hours at the gymnasium and training with the legion. A slow ache itched over me to feel them draw me close to his body.*

*Once Suetonius had endured my friends' endless chatter, he turned to me, asking if I would show him about Tullius' elaborate gardens. I pretended to be stunned that he would consider that I would be knowledgeable about such things. Of course, I modestly accepted and left the small group now dripping with absolute envy.*

*That was not the last garden we visited. Oh no. We deliberately found each other at the theater, games, the horse races, or simply wandered the markets together. We found any reason to slip away to anywhere to be alone, to talk, stroll, and listen to one another.*

*I will never forget the day I was supposed to be shopping for Saturnalia when I met Suetonius in Gardens of Sallust blustering with dry autumn leaves. It was here that Suetonius claimed my first kiss. My heart melted into his palms.*



### ***Gaius Suetonius Paulinus***

To this day, I have loved Procilla. She was all I saw the day we met at Tullius Marcus's party which was nothing more than an ordinary gathering. I came to celebrate and

announce my appointment as a *junior praetor*. I had come to begin to glean my own influence among Tullius' senatorial guests.

The moment I saw Procilla, I knew I must have her. I endured her friends' attempts to distract my attention with their prattle. She, too, endured those same attempts, standing beside me like a goddess—the most beautiful girl ever seen in Rome. It was her glowing face, the silk of her mahogany hair arranged in ringlets over her shoulder, her brown eyes -bright and laughing. She was so free and alive. Radiant.

The brush of her hand against my side sent shock waves through me. Instantly, I had to have Procilla alone, to myself. Having consumed enough prattle I asked her if she would show me the gardens. Her gaze instantly ignited like a stary night as she graciously agreed.

Strolling the gardens was the last thing I wanted, but I relished that Procilla was there beside me, properly smiling to any who passed us. Against my desire, we modestly kept a proper distance. Even so, she seemed to cling to my every word—words I know not where they came from. But I stood taller that day.

During our many escapes from Rome's entertainments, I learned quickly that her radiance could darken like a storm cloud when concern greeted her. It may be nothing more than disloyalty, a concern for her family, or if there was a threat to Rome. If more citizens had Procilla's sincerity and loyalty, Rome would glow as she did.

From that day at Tullius Marcus's party Procilla became my life. Until that very moment, I only lived to care for her. I lived to see her daily. I begged to hear her laugh. I basked in her sweet perfume of jasmine, which was to become the



cloud she walked in. Then, I knew there would never be enough jewels in the world for her. I wanted to give them all to her and then remove them ever so slowly. It was then that I wanted Procilla as mine. Only mine. But now....