



## **Furies**

*D.L. Johnstone*

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36 AD - The city of Alexandria is a center of Roman commerce—and a sinful playground for the pleasure-seeking rich and powerful.

For wealthy merchant Decimus Tarquitiu Aculeo, however, Alexandria has become a living hell. Ruined by a string of mysterious investment disasters, abandoned by friends and family, Aculeo is desperate to recover his wealth and status.

Aculeo's search for the reasons behind his downfall draws him into a web of violence. A common slave is found murdered in the magnificent temple of the god Serapis. Days later, the brutalized body of a high-priced hetaira is discovered floating in a canal, after an evening entertaining the city's elite. The grim truth soon becomes clear: A ruthless killer is moving among Alexandria's aristocrats, commercial titans, and philosophers.

Ominous clues connect those murders to Aculeo's own quest. Aided by an Egyptian mortuary attendant, a brilliant philosopher, an exotic hetaira, and his last remaining friends, Aculeo must unmask and stop a deadly murderer if he is ever to reclaim the life he has lost.

But first, he must survive...

## Furies Details

Date : Published March 25th 2013 by DL Johnstone (first published December 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9781482000290

Author : D.L. Johnstone

Format : Paperback 326 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Thriller, Mystery

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## From Reader Review Furies for online ebook

### Robert says

It was kind of slow going in the beginning but once you are acquainted with the cast of characters it begins to gather steam. There is some repetition in the retelling of aculeos past however the end is worth it and overall it was a good read.

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### Bob Milne says

This is probably one of the most intriguing historical crime thrillers I have ever had the pleasure of reading. It's not just a police procedural awkwardly transplanted to the Roman era, but a story of criminal intrigue that belongs entirely in that bygone, almost mythological era. Admittedly, I don't remember a great deal about my University studies in ancient history, but my sense is that Johnstone really knows his stuff.

Let's get the obvious out of the way and talk about the history. The setting here is impeccable, well-developed, perfectly detailed, and nicely balanced in terms of that with which we should be familiar - particularly the darker, poorer side of the city - and the elements most readers likely never encountered in school. The characters are strong as well, playing their expected roles in the world of ancient Alexandria, but also coming alive as living, breathing, individuals with whom we, as readers, interact. I suspect their crassness and vulgarity may be a bit anachronistic, but the genre pretty much demands it.

While more properly described as a thriller than a mystery, this is still a story that manages to build suspense, keep us guessing, and throw in a few twists along the way. Murder, theft, lies, and backstabbing betrayals, it's all here. Aculeo's story could just as easily have been a contemporary one, but likely not half as interesting. Despite beginning the story as a washed-up, bitter drunk, he's a character to whom we quickly warm up. Sekhet is a woman whom I'm sure is an anachronism, but I wouldn't have it any other way. She serves an important role in terms of plot, but also plays well off of Acuelo. There's a large cast of supporting characters, many of whom we only see for a scene, but they're all important.

Overall, probably the most unique read I've encountered in quite some time, and an altogether pleasant surprise. As genre-crossovers go, this one is not to be missed.

*Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins*

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### Jean-Pierre says

Mr. Johnstone has outdone himself. I really enjoyed his first book, Chalk Valley, even though a few things bugged me. Well, this time, he really created a series of great characters in this ancient city of Alexandria. You really feel like you know these people. When I first received my copy, I was a bit skeptical about a mystery/thriller story in that era. Well, it really works. Johnstone's knowledge of that period is amazing, reading the book is getting a slice of history lesson. Good story-telling, with a great ambiance created by the author provides for a really good read. The pace is very good. My one beef is about the swearing. Not that I

am offended by it, but my perception of the era would lend itself to a different kind of language. Maybe it is the influence of the PBS tv series "I, Claudius"? It just feels anachronistic to me. But it really is a small beef, and it does not take away from the suspense.

I had a hard time putting the book down at night, and my train rides felt shorter than usual. Highly recommended for fans of historical fiction. Great job Mr. Johnstone. Bring us a new story soon!!

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### **Susan says**

A very good read set in Alexandria in 36AD.

The book is full of intrigue, love, murder, dishonesty-- you name it and it is in this book.

The characters are believable and run the gamut of society! For the most part, human life doesn't hold much value. But there are a few willing to give their life for another.

I enjoyed the book and recommend it to readers that enjoy historical fiction.

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### **Puzzle Doctor says**

It's always refreshing to go into a book with no pre-conceptions. I had literally no idea what to expect from Johnstone. A minor bit of research revealed that this is his second book, his first being a modern day thriller, Chalk Valley, so this is his first foray into history.

It's an impressive one, as well. Alexandria is brought to life at all levels of society, and we follow Aculeo through his quest to find various truths, intersecting with a wide supporting cast, and with some surprising twists along the way – one in particular stood out.

One thing that is worth pointing out is that this is, for me at least, a rather unique beast. An historical thriller. Not to say that this is not a mystery – there is a significant who's-doing-what-to-whom element to the plot – but structurally, it feels like something from Jeffrey Deaver, only set in Alexandria. There is, I think, cluing for the main part of the mystery, but I think you need to be much better informed on your classics than I am to spot it. Not that this matters in the slightest though. There are at least two genuine surprises in the plot which nonetheless, in hindsight, still made sense. I could say three, but the third one does mean that Aculeo was a bit of a thicky in the past... but as this book is, in part, about his personal growth, then it's not exactly out of character. Aculeo, as the protagonist, is a convincing character and I'm very interested to see where his story goes.

Any niggles? Just the one. I'm no prude, but it was rather sweary in places. Just seemed a bit over the top at times.

So, overall, a strong debut into the genre and certainly worth a look. Recommended.

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## **Darcia Helle says**

Furies is a fascinating whodunit kind of mystery set in 36 A.D. Rome. I love ancient history and wanted to love this book. In the end, I'm left with mixed feelings.

The positives for me: This book is well written. I loved a few of the characters, particularly Sekhet, the healer/mortuary attendant. Parts of the time period stood out as well researched, such as the abject poverty and the struggle to survive. And the mystery unravels in a way that allows readers to try to solve the crimes along with the characters.

The negatives: There are a lot of characters, many that come and go for brief periods. At times I found it difficult to keep up with them all, and sort out their roles in the story.

The biggest downfall for me came in the dialogue and certain phrases in narration that were completely out of context for the time period. For instance, there is a lot of swearing. I have no problem with graphic language in books, providing it works for the characters and the situations. But people in 36 A.D. simply did not use our more modern curses. Each time a character said, "F\*\*k you!", or something similar, I was jarred right out of the story. I felt like the characters were jumping time periods, their identities confused, and it sometimes frustrated me to the point I'd have to put the book down.

I'm really picky about historical fiction. The details have to be right, and that didn't happen here.

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## **Paul Burnette says**

Clever mystery, wooden characters, and a far away place and time. Just enough plot twists to keep you reading, but then you look up at the end and say, "You know, this was interesting but I didn't really care very deeply how it turned out for Aculeo. I was entertained, as one should be by the skillful hetaira."

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## **Betsy Hover says**

I was delighted to receive this book "Furies: An Ancient Alexandrian Thriller" from Goodreads Giveaway!

Furies is a fascinating mystery that transports you into 36 A.D. Rome. I love ancient history and the author did an awesome job making the time period come alive in the readers mind and the book stood out for me as being well researched. The characters were well formed and this allowed the reader to move along with the characters in order to try to solve the crimes taking place as the mystery unravels.

The only downside to this book was some of the language issues. Certain words and phrases were completely out of context for this time period.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone that loves to read about Ancient History.

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## **Erin says**

I received this book from Goodreads Historical Fictionistas Group Giveaway.

I really enjoyed this book. The story opens with the losses faced by Decimus Tarquitis Aculeo, a man of former wealth and stature. He is deserted by his family and friends after losing his wealth and house, he is determined to find the man he blames for the disaster. The search leads Aculeo deep into the criminal world, where he must first face his own enemies and regain their trust.

Even being a bitter, disillusioned drunk, he stumbles upon the body of a murdered slave at the temple of a God, and another body floating in a canal. While investigating he finds himself on the trail of a murderer, with only healer/ancient forensic pathologist, Sekhet, to trust. As he gets closer to the murderer, he recognizes a connection to his own case.

We get a deep look at history and flavor of life in Alexandria. The story moves quickly and includes plenty of unexpected surprises. The intrigue and appeal of the ancient world is evident in his book and delivers a creative crime thriller. I caught on to one of the villains of the book but the other caught me completely by surprise. Overall a very Goodread.

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## **JeanBookNerd says**

In *Furies: An Ancient Alexandrian Thriller*, D.L. Johnstone strategically mixes historical fiction and an incredible thriller to deliver a very unique tale of murder and mystery. Readers are introduced to business savvy Decimus Tarquitius Aculeo. The luxurious life that he has built for himself is quickly going down the drain after a series of bad investments he had made and not to mention that he has become a virulent drunk. Hoping to regain all that he has lost (his wealth, family and friends), he will do just about anything. Desperation sets in and his search for answers lands him into a series of murders that he will need to solve in order to get the life he dreadfully wants back.

Set in ancient Roman, I found the police work that Aculeo embarks on was a totally refreshing approach. This period in time provided new insights on how a modern day thriller would play out. Aculeo is the perfect protagonist for this kind of story. He is a strong and bold character with moves and decisions that are backed with forceful demands. It is obvious that he was determined to get to the bottom of things. Other characters also played out well and their roles had significant meanings towards the entirety of the story. The interactions between characters are entertaining and fully engaging.

The mystery is intriguingly enough that it is able to build a heart-pounding suspense where I found myself guessing at certain areas of the book. Although Aculeo has plagued with drinking and becoming a bitter drunk, the mystery he has surfaced upon will quickly have readers siding with him.

Historical crime fictions take some serious thoughts and consideration and Johnstone did exactly just that. The setting he decided to tell the story is immaculately honed with enough details that readers can easily place themselves into Aculeo's world. I can totally appreciate a story more when I am able to transfer my state of mind into the lead character. Johnstone's writing style is unique in a sense that in this crossover genre, readers can enjoy the story even if they are not familiar with one of the genre. *Furies* takes everything that we all have come to love from history, crime, mystery, and thriller and Johnstone mixes them into a tale

that is surprisingly pleasant, exciting and fully entertaining.

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### **Shawn says**

Set in Ancient Alexandria during Roman rule, this mystery-thriller has some nice twists and turns to it. I also enjoyed the tidbits of philosophy that found their way into the story. Besides the fun gimmick of Ancient Rome (which is what grabbed me), I thought the book was interesting and fun. The characters were well-drawn and believable. I particularly liked the ancient "CSI" elements from the Egyptian healer Sekhet. The plot was not obvious and had me guessing for most of the book. I hope Johnstone writes more in this setting and with these characters.

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### **Kayla West says**

I love historical fiction, and I also especially love thrillers. So when given the opportunity to review *Furies: An Ancient Alexandrian Thriller* by D.L. Johnstone, which has both the word ancient and thriller in the title (YAY!), I could not wait to read it. In fact I used my free month trial of prime on Kindle to borrow this. (It was just sitting there collecting dust, so why not use it?) Boy, am I glad I did.

This book has everything. From murder to love to deceit, even desperation, *Furies* makes your head reel from the very beginning. It starts out by introducing us to a man named Decimus Tarquinius Aculeo. (What a name, huh?) He has just run into a bit of a rut concerning an investment he has made. Okay, maybe "a bit of a rut" is an understatement, because he just lost everything that he has known for years. His wife, his son, even his precious multi-level villa in the city of Alexandria. All of his possessions have been auctioned off. He has nothing to show for his former life...except maybe his very loyal slave Xanthias. That's only the prologue, folks.

The real story starts about three months later. We find that Aculeo has at least found himself somewhere to stay, even if it is a rotting hellhole of a place. However, he has taken to spending all his money on drink as the hope of returning to his former success slips through his fingers. In the streets of Alexandria, after selling some of the final possessions he had hidden away and gaining some coin, Aculeo spots a dead man. Not in the sense you might think. This man had been thought dead, but, as Aculeo can see, is very much alive and kicking. This man, known by the name of Iovinus, was thought to have died in the same accident that claimed Aculeo's money and livelihood. Spotting Iovinus starts a long chain of unanswered questions for Aculeo. It also starts a chain reaction of murders in which we are introduced to a woman named Sekhet who seems to be the ancient Alexandrian equivalent of a medical examiner. She is probably as ancient as the city itself, but she can somehow speak for the dead. She informs Aculeo that foul play is involved when the first death is discovered.

As each body is found, we find, along with Aculeo and Sekhet, that the murders are connected somehow. Possibly by a thin yellow cord tied around the victim's wrists...

This book was very thought out and well-researched. It had all the makings of a good historical fiction novel because it immersed the reader in the land of Alexandria. The descriptions were, to me at least, enveloping

and made the world in which Aculeo lived jump out in my imagination. However, I would have liked the author to put some pronunciations in the beginning of the book along with the descriptions of everything because at times I felt that I was not saying the names at all right.

This book is a phenomenal read, a little slow maybe at first, but full of excitement. It has all the makings of a really well-written novel. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

For a chance to win a free copy of this book go to:

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[http://www.ireadabookonce.com/2013/01...??](http://www.ireadabookonce.com/2013/01...?)

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### **Jenny Hilborne says**

Furies is a tale of greed and corruption, set in Alexandria in ancient Roman Times.

The story opens with the losses faced by Roman, Decimus Tarquitis Aculeo, a man of former wealth and stature. Questions surround the investments he made which have led to his ruin. Deserted by his family and friends, he is determined to find the man he blames for the disaster, the man he believes tricked him and stole his wealth, and recover what he has lost. The search leads Aculeo deep into the criminal world, where he must first face his own enemies and regain their trust.

As he hunts for the explanations behind his defeat, he learns shocking truths about the man he blames, and encounters violence from others who try to stop him. When he stumbles upon the body of a murdered slave at the temple of a God, and another body floating in a canal, he finds himself on the trail of a murderer, with only a strange type of healer to trust. As he gets closer to the murderer, he recognizes a connection in the clues to his own pursuit of his lost fortune.

The Author introduces the reader to a rich cast of characters and delves deep into the history of an ancient Roman city, providing a flavor of life in Alexandria, its commerce, beliefs, Gods, wisdom, knowledge, life of the poor, and the good and the evil behind its power. Some of the ancient names are difficult to pronounce, which some readers may find slows the pace a bit; however, the story moves well and includes plenty of unexpected surprises. The story appears well researched, and the author's knowledge of the era in which he writes is impressive. The intrigue and appeal of the ancient world is evident in his book.

Johnstone builds the suspense and maintains the tension all the way through the book, provides an unexpected yet satisfying conclusion, and delivers a creative crime thriller.

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### **Jayne Fenside says**

Bravo to Johnstone! FURIES is a fresh new approach to murder and mystery. Greed, power, corruption and murder are every bit as compelling in ancient Alexandria as they are in modern times. This is a carefully crafted book with multiple complex characters and twists and turns to appeal to all readers. The story and suspense built steadily and kept me guessing right down to the final 10 pages! Admittedly, it took me a about 50 pages to settle into the ancient references, names and descriptions and I felt my vocabulary was certainly



being enriched. I am in awe of the creativity that Johnstone invested to delight the reader. I sincerely hope we continue to see more from this new authour.

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## **Shomeret says**

I was impressed with the thoroughness of Johnstone's research and his ability to incorporate it into the plot without trying to overwhelm us with detail. For those who are interested in knowing more, there is a glossary which includes the sectors of the city of Alexandria.

I was surprised that the protagonist's wife, Titania had the right to take his son when she left him in the opening of the novel. According to Wikipedia on Women in Ancient Rome , in a marriage between two free citizens, a wife could take custody of the children if she could prove that her husband was "worthless". Titania probably could have done so because he had lost everything he owned.

From a mystery standpoint, this is a noir novel which is not my genre. Aculeo, the sympathetic central character, made Furies seem less dark with his sense of honor and decency in the midst of all the corruption. Another character that I really liked was Sekhet, the Egyptian healer/medical examiner who assisted Aculeo in solving the case.

For my complete review see my July 2013 blog post "Furies: A Noir Mystery in Roman Alexandria" at <http://www.maskedpersona.blogspot.com>

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