



The Etruscan Chimera

Lyn Hamilton

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Now, in *The Etruscan Chimera*, antiques dealer Lara McClintoch is hired by a reclusive billionaire to purchase an obscure Etruscan sculpture. But the land of old Tuscany hides danger behind its charm, as Lara finds out when she discovers a prominent collector buried in his own Etruscan tomb.

Author Biography: Lyn Hamilton is the author of five previous novels including *The Xibalba Murders*, nominated by the Crime Writers of Canada Association for the Arthur Ellis Award for Best First Novel.

The Etruscan Chimera Details

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Terri Lynn says

I really loved this book in Lyn Hamilton's series of archaeological mysteries about antique store owner/designer Lara McClintoch. Lara's ex-husband is now divorced from his rich wife and goes back into the business with Lara when Lara's partner Sarah wants out.

It looks like a reclusive billionaire wants Lara to go to France and get a statue from a collector for him. When Lara arrives, she begins meeting some odd characters and facing massive confusion over who is really who. This one has a lot of info on the Etruscans which are a great interest of mine . You will marvel at the twists and turns in this one where the good guys are bad guys and the bad guys aren't who they say they are. She is in the UK, France, and Italy in this book and I loved the descriptions. Even the police are not to be trusted and the person who hired her wasn't who she thought at all. Dead bodies keep turning up but Lara has a very complicated mystery to solve.

I really loved this one.

Marie Parsons says

Although this novel came out in 2002, it is a wonderful read any time, and right now. I may be biased, because it centers around Etruscan antiquities, and I have a personal fondness for Etruscan history. When two characters briefly discussed the Etruscan Lars Porsenna I actually cheered aloud.

Putting all that aside, this fascinating mystery moves well through the Tuscan countryside, into France, and back into Italy, as the protagonist seeks a piece of Etruscan art. She, Lara McClintoch, seeks a piece of Etruscan sculpture, and discovers, along the way, an odd collection of individuals--none of whom can really be trusted, some of whom are actual villains.

A definite must-read.

Stephanie says

This was a pretty good book, but I think there were a few too many characters. It was hard to keep everyone straight, especially since almost all of the characters had Italian names. It was a page turner and kept me guessing "who done it". Lara, the main character, is well developed and totally gets sucked into a plot to buy a sculpture for a client.

C. says

I loved **Lyn Hamilton** upon her first novel. I am sad that she died of cancer in 2009, with more novels planned. I savour them by leaving two years in between these precious eleven. I was younger when I started but thought it high time we meet an adventuresome 40 year-old, who is intelligent and single. Lara McClintoch sells antiquities in Toronto. The weakest novel by **Lyn** is better than many! In consideration of

her brisk writing, engrossing atmosphere, tricky twists, and demonstration of real knowledge, from Ontario's cultural department; I bestow four stars. She artfully teaches of a different civilization every time. "**The Etruscan Chimera**" entails ancient Italy. Her originality is especially gratifying. Not only do **Lyn's** mysteries scurry outside any blueprint: she consistently furnishes uniqueness within her own series.

The two less successful aspects are these. This outing comprises a wild goose chase, dampening its capacity to project **Lyn's** usual mystical aura and mysteriousness. Those traits generate the tone archaeological readers seek. They would sense its absence. The tantalizing ingredient of searching for something rare flickers fleetingly but lacks the thrill of breaching secret places. The axis is not discovery. It is character-driven; not about where Lara might unearth a relic. When her patron doesn't care which Etruscan artifact Lara obtains, thrill and urgency dim, except the distrust arising from this commission.

The denouement is preposterous. Reading why the artifact was wanted, we imagine easier modes of obtaining it than zigzagging. However, continuous action keeps interest in this adventure taut; culminating in murders that darken the atmosphere and suddenly supply urgency and an elevation of feelings. Lara sees the flaws we do. Her determination to sift out answers from an elusive source is my favourite sequence. Begin in order and see why **Lyn's** Canadian series is my favourite!

Diana says

Lara is co-owner of an antique shop in Toronto. She goes on buying trips to purchase antiques for their shop. Much to her surprise, an eccentric billionaire asks her to purchase a chimera, an Etruscan artifact, so he may return it to an Italian museum. She travels to France in pursuit of the chimera which she finds and loses several times. Mysterious suicides and frightening experiences cause her to wonder "who can she trust". In addition to reading an enjoyable book, I learned a bit about the Etruscan civilization.

Sarah says

As with the other books I've read from this series, this one was interesting and quite a good read. I love the characters and the story as well. The ending of this one was a little more complex than usual, but it was pulled off quite well. All in all, if you like mysteries, you'll probably like this.

C.G. says

I think these books can get old fast. This is only the second one and I have another one from the library, but I returned one without reading it and cancelled another hold. If you're interested in archaeological history, then you might enjoy them more than I did. I found it too much like a lecture, interrupting the momentum of the mystery. The author obviously had (I'm sorry to say she died recently) a lot of knowledge - and passion - for her subject, but unless it was a period I'm interested in (like "The Celtic Riddle"), it just gets in the way of the reason I'm reading the book - the mystery.

In this book, there were way too many characters involved and most of them were not well-developed. I certainly have a lot of respect for her ability to keep them all straight and bring them in at various points in the book, but by the end, I just didn't care - and five minutes after putting it down, couldn't tell you who the

murderer(s) was/were.

Writerlibrarian says

Interesting and intricate mystery inspired by the object everyone wants in this book : The Chimera.

As always, the historical, archaeological information is interesting and not put down our throat in info dump paragraphs. Lyn Hamilton successfully merges her mystery plot point with her historical information. The plot is a bit too fancy for its own good but in the end it's a good read.

el_quijote says

The Etruscan Chimera by Canadian writer Lyn Hamilton is the latest in her series of murder mystery novels that take place in interesting foreign locations and which deal with the theft of archaeological antiquities. This story takes place in the Tuscan area of Italy, once inhabited by people known as Etruscans, who were eventually conquered and assimilated into the Roman Empire. The heroine is a Toronto antique dealer Lara McClintoch, also featured in Hamilton's previous five novels. Reclusive billionaire Crawford Lake hires her to find and buy an ancient Etruscan artifact. The plot includes mystery, murder, intrigue and travel throughout northern Italy, all ingredients for an exciting novel. The exact regurgitation of which is not relevant.

I would compare Hamilton's writing to a more exciting form of the Agatha Christie novel. This comparison is especially relevant when Lara McClintoch brings together all the possible suspects into one final climatic, revelatory scene, in true Hercules Perrot fashion.

I think anyone that is interested in Rome or Tuscany, archaeological antiquities or just loves murder mysteries will find this novel a simple, fast-moving, enjoyable read.

Matthew says

The Chimera of Arezzo happens to be my favorite sculpture, so it is nice to see it featured so prominently. Hamilton has clearly done some background reading but falls short in places.

For example, she superficially describes the bronze liver of Piacenza and its role in haruspicy (the divination of the future from reading entrails), but does not really capture the Etruscan belief that the macrocosm (the heavens and their inhabitants) is perfectly legible in the microcosm of the liver at the moment a willing sheep is sacrificed.

Occasional references to the Etruscan god Tinia (Zeus/Jupiter) make sense given the inscription on the Chimera, but I'd also expect Fufluns (Dionysus/Bacchus) to appear in his underworld capacity, given the murders.

One historical problem is that Etruscan haruspices are always depicted with one foot raised on a rock or mound of earth; the character who is reported to have done so would likely not have met this requirement.

The description of the Chimera of Arezzo is also lacking- although it mentions the realistic aspects of

muscles rippling under the skin, it does not address how very stylized other parts, like the lion's mane, are. It is that seamless marriage of disparate elements that makes the statue so beguiling. It is also said that the Chimera was a major influence on Benvenuto Cellini and his Perseus. The Perseus was reputed to be the first Renaissance Bronze that was compositionally perfect from 8 axes; the Chimera is from 360 degrees. Also, the Chimera is depicted at the critical moment of the Bellerophon myth- a dangerously wounded beast whose defeat and dispatch is close, but far from certain.

There was no mention of the metal working mastery of the Etruscans other than lost wax bronze casting- not the fact that their goldsmithing remains unrivalled even in modern times (granulation- setting individual globules of gold scarcely larger than grains of sand- into decorative patterns required controlling smelting temperatures to within half a degree!), nor that there are tens of thousands of engraved hand held mirrors extant. Clearly a people who believed in lavishing gifts.

The pace is brisk and the plot brings the reader on a very nice sojourn through some very beautiful places in Europe. The denouement was structurally and thematically well-crafted though not unpredictable. I'd recommend a paperback copy for airport reading on the way to central Italy, and leaving it in the B&B for a stranger.

Lydia says

The subject and ideas behind the book are intriguing. I love history and am fascinated by the Etruscans. I enjoyed the trip through France and Italy and the descriptions of architecture and artifacts. At the heart of the book is the point that private collectors, nefarious dealers and auction houses are to blame for the ruination of culture- these artifacts should be in their rightful place in museums. However- the plot was VERY convoluted, the characters were numerous and confusing and it took about ten pages too long to untangle the mystery at the end. By the end, I wasn't sure I cared who stole what. Overall, it was original and raises some very thought provoking questions. Three strong stars.

LDuchess says

Like Hamilton's other "archaeological" mysteries, this has nothing to do with actual "digging" for artifacts. There's always a mystery or two involved, which Lara solves, or helps to solve. And the research into each setting that I've read is alone worth reading. You get a real feel for the scenery and atmosphere of each place (Budapest in The Magyar Venus; Malta --The Maltese Goddess; Ireland in The Celtic Riddle, and Italy in this book).

This story, however, has Lara spending so much time in Europe, with so many acquaintances and possible suspects, it's more than a little hard to keep track. Starting in Rome, she then finds herself in Paris, Vichy, Volterra, Arezzo, Cortona, back to Rome, then off to Ireland, etc! And the places are outnumbered by the characters she deals with.

It's well written, and fun to follow, but a little more work to read than her other books.

Nora Ray says

I enjoyed this because there was a lot of geographical detail as well as a sprinkle of history. This is part of a series, I believe, so I will be getting the others.

Julie says

Clean mystery, with travel & some archeological data thrown in. Similar to the Vicky Bliss series by Elizabeth Peters.

Betsy says

this was the first of these books I read .. maybe one needs to start at #1 to get into them but I was very disappointed .. I'm not into Etruscan or any archaeology, read it as a mystery and it was flat .. long .. sorry .. guess these just aren't for me .. I have the next one also and will read it to see if it grabs me any better ..
