

# Backstage at Cry Havoc!

## Roman Cults and Religions

### Content Notes

- Cults & Rituals
- Alcohol & Alcohol Use
- Knives
- Discussions of: Human Sacrifice, fraternities
- SFX: Crowds

### [Show Theme - Intro]

#### LOWRI

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's Backstage at Cry Havoc, where we are talking about cults, which is a very exciting topic, I think. And I am joined by David K. Barnes and Rafaella Marcus. Please both could you introduce yourselves with your pronouns and let us know what you did on the show, Cry Havoc, though, frankly, if you've listened this far and you don't know who David is. Well, maybe you haven't listened to them all, [laugh], but he has been on a few. David, would you like to go first?

#### DAVID

Hello, I, I'm David. I, uh, here I'm the creator of Cry Havoc, which you may or may not have listened to.

**RAF**

Yeah. Hi, I'm, I'm Raf, she her and they them, and I wrote episode seven of Cry Havoc and also episode eight, the next episode set in the theatre. So, um, I have a, a vested interest in saying yes, please, please listen to the, just listen to seven and eight. You don't usually listen the rest of the series.

**LOWRI**

[laughs] You don't need any more context.

**RAF**

But seven and eight you should listen to, and you may know me and my other guise as the director and one of the writers of, of Trice Forgotten as well. Um, another Rusty Quill historical show.

**LOWRI**

Indeed.

**RAF**

I'm getting my plugs in early today.

**LOWRI**

Well done. Excellent work. Excellent work. Really appreciate it. Right. Let's start with a brief description of what happens in episode seven, though hopefully everyone has just listened. Would you like to take it, Raf?

**RAF**

Uh, this is the episode in which Octavius and Mark tried to join a cult.

**LOWRI**

Yes.

**RAF**

They try to join the cult of Mithras, which I'm sure we'll get into, but it was a real Roman cult...

**LOWRI**

Oh!

**RAF**

...on the, the promise of, of great riches. And meanwhile, in parallel, Fulvia and Cleopatra are having a spiky Girl Boss drinks [laugh]. That's my description. It's, it's all set over a single night and Octavia's there as well. But I I, I shouldn't spoil her role.

**LOWRI**

Do you know what I think that scene between Fulvia and Cleopatra was the first I ever read of Cry Havoc, cause it was the audition scene for Fulvia.

**RAF**

Oh!

**LOWRI**

Yeah. And I really loved it, so that's nice, isn't it? What's your experience, Raf, with writing for writers' rooms? Have you done that before? cause you write a lot by yourself, I know that.

**RAF**

I do cause um, I'm a controlling and harsh mistress of no [laugh]. No, actually this was my first writer's room, and then from here I was asked if I'd like to come on board with Trice Forgotten as well. So that was my second writer's room. I, I loved being in the, the Cry Havoc writer's room cause I don't know if you've covered this in, in previous episodes, but David and Amani had produced this very, very brilliantly useful and comprehensive show Bible that also included breaking down the series into sections and sort of going, well, we're going to assign two writers to a section. And I, being who I am, there was a section where they went; "Yeah, in this, in this bit. It's quite early in the series, we don't really need to do any overarching plot at this point. We just kind of wanna play in the sandbox of what we've got". And I went, oh, can I do that please? Because I have thoughts and ideas and opinions about what might be fun to hear in a sitcom setting in ancient Rome.

**LOWRI**

So what did you have to work from writing them, the show Bible, I guess, but did you have things you needed to hit?

**RAF**

Yeah, the, so this, then I wrote the next one, which is theatre as well. So that obviously involves Octavia and, and Charmian. So there are things that I needed to hit in, in that episode. And then also in the way of when you have a

writer's room, then when David takes everything away and script edits it and goes, oh, we've actually decided to move up a plot beat here. So we're actually, we're going to put that could, you know, so sometimes in the notes it was actually, could you write this into the episode? We've now decided that this is a good place for this thing to happen. Or you write a version of a character and then once you know, David and Amani have looked at the whole series, they've sort of gone our understanding this character has moved a bit, so could you rewrite them so they're more like this. So yeah, it was a very kind of collaborative kind of back and forth process. I would say this one about cults, I think was more me wanting to write about cults. Um, [laugh] it was, it was, you know, the, the prompt was Mark and Gaius need money.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

And, and I went, oh, I've got an idea.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**LOWRI**

Oh, brilliant. I was going to ask, was it always going to be cults or did that come from you? And it came from you...

**DAVID**

That was Raf. One of the topics in the Bible said at some point we ought to do an episode that's vaguely about religion.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

And, and that was it. And then Raf said, I've got cults. I went Yeah. And came up with an entire sort of outline of Gaius and Mark join the Freemasons and I went, yeah, that's, yeah. Yeah. Done. Yeah, absolutely.

**LOWRI**

That's brilliant. Raf, what was your Rome knowledge before? Cause I know David has degree history with it, as it were. What was yours?

**RAF**

Well, I, I'm I'm what they, uh, commonly refer to as a, a nerd Lowri. So, um,  
[laugh]

**LOWRI**

Fantastic.

**RAF**

I do not have kind of history degree, kind of level knowledge of it. But I studied Latin at school again, like, like optionally...

**LOWRI**

[laugh] sorry!

**RAF**

Again, like a nerd and kind of, yeah. I chose to do Latin at school and I really liked it. And then I ended up doing it all the way up to a level and then didn't do it at university because I kind of had a realistic view of myself and I went, I'm not that good at it. Um, but through reading the language, cause obvi- very obviously, it's a dead language. So kind the point of Latin is to get an insight into a culture and a set of literature and, um, in its original language. So it is, my entry point is very much through the language and the literature. But even before that, you know, it was just one of the periods of history that, that I loved. I think we kind of have a view of the Romans as, is it's kind of, it's either sort of orgies and decadence or it's this kind of sort of sour faced empire builders and, you know, there's, there's a real weirdness to this period and in time I think it's much more alien than we give it credit for.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. [laugh]

**DAVID**

Yes.

**LOWRI**

So what is a cult? Like I, I know, right? But like why is that different to just like a society of people, like a group of people who just meet or how is it different to a religion or is it not different to a religion? And maybe let's try and narrow that to in Roman times and now as well. I think that's relevant.

**RAF**

Yeah. Well we usually have a, a specific idea of associations with the word cult, you know, when we say it now. But it's a word that kind of begins as, as like a subset of a, a religion, like a sect. But, you know, I don't think there's any hard and fast boundaries to what makes something a cult rather than like a, a denomination of, of something. But usually there's, there's a measure of secrecy around it. There's a, there's an insiders and outsider's feel to it, the cult of Mithras, which is the one in the episode, which was a real Roman cult. You know, you could also call it a secret society and you can kind of see when my brain started going in terms of how it's characterised in the episodes. But yeah, it's, and and a religious cult obviously usually has like a focal point of worship.

So it's a, you know, like lots of Roman gods, but a religious cult, a Roman religious cult focused just on the one god's specific rights. Um, and kinda mysteries related to that. So, you know, there's also you, if you've read *The Secret History* by, by Donna Tartt.

**DAVID**

Oh yeah.

**RAF**

A fantastic book that I love and there's a group of classic students in that who kind of start recreating the sort of Greek ancient mystery rights of Dionysus, who is Bacchus in, in Roman God terms. So yeah, it was this combination of religion and secrecy I think of kind of, you'd be initiated into it. There are rights and rituals, it has a hierarchical structure to it or the, the Mithras cult certainly

had a hierarchical structure to it of like the longer you were in the higher you ascend. So that is where the kind of Scientology sort of comparisons come in.

Yeah.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. I just had a little moment of glee. Cause even though the other backstage episode with Raf is going to come out after this, we have recorded it before and I just made me think of Snake Boy, the Buffy episode where they encounter a fraternity cult, right?

**RAF**

Yes! And I am sure that was in my head when I wrote this episode. It's a very like Buffy-esque joke, I think, to kind of build up like, oh, this ancient mysterious, slightly sinister cult and then it's a drinking society.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. [laugh]. Gosh. So tell me about the cult of Mithras then. Where did you first encounter them? Who were they and what do we know about them?

**RAF**

So actually, so Gaius is spouting off a bunch of stuff about them at the beginning of the episode, which is all accurate. So, so he gives you the history of them, but, um, Mithras wasn't a Roman God originally. Cause this is the other thing the way, like the way that religion works when you have a colonising force is it kind of starts to assimilate local religions kind of, and, and other countries religions into, into its own. I came across the cult of Mithras because in London, where I live, you can go and visit the remains of the temple

of Mithras from Roman Britain. And it's in the basement of the Bloomberg building in the city of London as in the area of the city of London. I think it, it's actually recreation, but it's free to go in. You know, you sort of go down into the basement and it's very beautifully curated and it's the remains of this temple and they've kind of created a bit of an installation to give you a feel of what the atmosphere would be like.

And I read about this and I kind of went, oh, I'm, one day I was out and about and I was like, oh, nearby, I'm just going to go and see what it's like and there's a lot of nice sort of exhibition and information about it. And I went in and I walked around and I'd been reading the information they'd given about the rituals and the hierarchy of the cult. And, and, and Mithras is kind of unique in being actually one of the only men only ones actually mostly they had like mixed gender membership. And I went in and I was like, I am in the heart of the financial district of this city walking around the remains of this all male cult that was by all accounts influential through the back channels, you know, like the Masons. And I sort of went, this isn't religious at all.

I was like, you know, this has a veneer of religion. This is a boys club, this is a private members club to kind of create the unofficial channels of power. Um, you know, I've got no way of proving that, but that's, that was my take on it. So yes, and I tend to write this episode, it was kind of all there already. I sort of this idea about the cult of Mithras, which was a very popular cult that had kind of come from Parthia, I think it was or somewhere. Um, and and Mithras is a very weird God who has a specific iconography of like, he's riding a bull and he has a funny looking hat [laugh] and kind of, you know, I mean there's a dog and some stars. He's, it's all a very specific set of stuff. Um, but I sort of went, yeah, well it's, um, yeah, it's a boys club, it's a and that then became a drinking

society in the, and I I was thinking also about like the Bullingdon Club and other  
sort of all male establishments that, um,

**LOWRI**

I don't know, the Bullingdon Club, is that Cambridge or Oxford?

**RAF**

It's Oxford. It's the, the Drinking Society that, uh, several of our esteemed  
prime ministers have belong to. And it reflects very well on us as a nation.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. Yep, yep, yep. [sarcasm] Great. Something that is occurring to me, I don't  
know that I would, yeah, I wouldn't describe the Freemasons as a cult.

**DAVID**

[gasps]

**LOWRI**

But I suppose they are in a way. But you are right, it's a boys club for sure.

**DAVID**

Lowri is a Freemason.

**OTHERS**

[laugh]

**LOWRI**

No, I just think that people have too harsh a view on them, you know?

**OTHERS**

[laugh]

**LOWRI**

No, I do not, I do not! So you've mentioned religion a few times. Am I understanding right that the cult or cults would have started in religion?

**RAF**

Yeah. And, and, and Mithras was definitely still a, a, a religious cult. It's kinda, cause you know, the Romans, they have lots of gods that they stole from the Greeks. Um, you know, they're, they're literally the same gods with different names. So yeah, you just get, you know, in the same way actually as, if you look at something like Catholicism now, it's such a global religion. There are areas of the kind, like there are sort of South American countries where they have a particular, and they will, they use the word cult, but with a slightly different definition. Like the cult of Mary worship, you know, is kind of, you know, or the cult of a particular saint. And it kind of more means like a devotion, I think, to a particular religious figure. And, you know, it's a huge, huge part of public life religion in, in Rome. It sort of crossover also into theatre, which, uh, more, you know, more on that next week [laugh]. Because, you know, this is, I think the thing about mythologies is that when we think of mythologies, we think of them as being not the stories, but they're not just stories. It's like Bible stories. It's, they're religious stories. They are, there's an element of truth to them to, to the Romans. Um, because it's explaining the world and it's explaining the way the gods behave.

**DAVID**

I know Roman religion doesn't have much, most of it, a lot of its mythology like it's gods that is taken from Greece and other places. A lot of their mythology, they don't really fuss about how the world's created, but they are very fussed about how Rome is created and how Rome is founded. And so they're not really fussed about anything beyond Rome itself. It's a very sort, sort of blinkered view of everything. It's like, let's look at the foundation of Rome and let's go Romulus and Remus and let's go further back. Let's look at Aeneas escaping the Trojan War and you know, coming to Italy and there's a, there's a lot of that, there's a lot of mythology in in that area.

**RAF**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

And religion is so fundamental to Roman society. I think to us it's the probably the biggest deviation the way, uh, that this series presents room compared to ancient as we know, it is the world of religion, uh, which is integral to Roman society in a way which it is kind of an occasional mention in, in this. I think there's probably more mention of religion in this one episode than the rest of the series combined. And even then it's not, we're not even looking at big Roman gods. Uh, you know, we're not looking at festivals of Jupiter and and series. We are looking at like a cult. And it's a secret mystery cult, which is just, it's a lot of fun to do some of this. Cause I think this is when, when Raf uh, said, I wanna do one about cults. I thought, yes, this is one of the easiest ways to have a kind of analogy to now. And I was thinking like Freemasons, but also,

yeah, Bullingdon club and just drinking societies and, and these sort of the hazing where people, uh, with initiations and you get blindfolded and then...

**LOWRI**

Yeah, very fraternity feeling.

**DAVID**

Yeah. Yeah. I think leaning very far into that, I actually, there's I look at the, the initiations of the Mithras, or how to get into the cult of Mithras through my esteemed colleague Wikipedia

**OTHERS**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

Which says, uh, "initiates were naked bound to their arms behind them and kneeled before a priest whereupon they would be released on bondage and crowned but not permitted to rise until a particular moment." It's all very eyes wide shut.

**OTHERS**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

There's a great deal of feasting involved as well. But there's all these like curious initiations about, which we know very little because the sad thing about them being secret cults is that most of 'em kept the secret, and so they

didn't write it down. And so we don't know much about em. We know they existed, we don't know much about them. But that's good cause it means that we can just make it up.

**RAF**

It always, it sort of struck me that, you know, there's these very sort of revered, like the one that's kind of mentioned in the secret history. You have like the Etruscan mysteries and the Dionysus in this, all of this, you know, and, and the kind of interpretation of them through the years because we don't know the facts of them being oh, that they must have taken incredible hallucinogens and gone into these, these frenzied states where they communicate with the divine. And this is my kind of a little bit of an answer to that. I was like... or...

**OTHERS**

[laugh]

**RAF**

...or they're a drinking society or we like dressing up and saying some funny words cause we get to have a big drink and a big meal afterwards.

**LOWRI**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

Yeah. Because it's not, like religion is so tied to everything and there's state, like, there, there is no division between church and state. Religion is at the heart of Roman society and politics. I think actually Pontifex Maximus I think

isn't that the highest sort of, um, titles you can have in ancient Rome. And it's connected to the priesthood. In fact, Lepidus was the Pontifex Maximus at this time. He isn't in this series cause that would be far too responsible a job for our Lepidus be able to fulfil. But the real Lepidus was made Pontifex Maximus and the various statesmen, they all, you know, Gaius Octavian um, associated himself with the god Apollo. And in fact much later in his life, tried to sort of circulate the rumour that his father was Apollo and he was actually born of divinity. Um, Mark Antony associates himself with Heracles and then with Dionysis, Bacchus. And it's this thing of, you know, that God you all like, I'm like that. Yeah. I'm like that He, he he's my mate. I'm sort of like the embodiment of that God. And it's, it's, it's a very odd state of affairs,

**RAF**

Which you can sort of feel Cleopatra's influence in that as well.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

Cause the Egyptian pharaohs are gods, you know, they're living gods and you know, she was very canny with her iconography of being the goddess Isis reborn and her son or her various and sort of being, this is Horace, Isis's son, kind of rebo, you know, and that's the sort of branding that she used on the coin. So it's not a huge stretch from there to Mark Antony going, I could be a God.

**DAVID**

Yeah. Dei...deification is quite crucial. Or in, in, in Rome. Like you, you're not a God when you're alive, but when you die you can be made a God somehow afterwards. So the idea that, you know, Cleopatra walking as a living God, that's very bad form. You're not meant to be a God deal after you die.

**LOWRI**

Is that anyone could be made a God or is it just if you're...

**RAF**

Oh no, no, no, no, no.

**LOWRI**

...yeah, if you're a special person. Gotcha. Yeah. Thou... thought so [laughs]

**RAF**

So Ovid, poet Ovid wrote a book called The Metamorphosis or lots of poems, they'd all tell various myths of transformation. But it also kind of goes chronologically through like the mythological history of it goes from the creation of the world to the deification of Julius Caesar. It sort of goes through time to, yeah. And exactly as David said earlier, you know, the big like nation building myth is that Rome was founded by a guy called Aeneas who was a Trojan. He was escaped from the Trojan War and his mum is Venus. So, you know, there's a divine heritage to Rome. And then hilariously actually lots of other post Roman empire, a bunch of other European countries sort of copied that and like sort of went, oh, we were all founded by fleeing Trojans. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**RAF**

Oh yeah. London. London had a my... Paris had a myth of like, oh yeah, yeah.

No, we had a Trojan as well. Wasn't just Rome.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

Yeah. I think the, the biggest cult or the cult in, in, in Rome, which ends up having the, the, the greatest sway over things, uh, cause it was a cult for a while, is Christianity, which is technically sort of a kind of a cult for a while until it gets very big and then it isn't cause too many people are following it. But that's not happening at this time. But Christianity is a very big thing. And in fact it's Christianity several, you know, a hundred years later when Rome ends up, you know, Roman emperors end up converting to Christianity, they then that they start stamping out a lot of these cults, including the cult of Mithras. Cult of Mithras eventually kind of meets its end because Christianity stamps it out. Or at least the imperial version of Christianity as practised by Roman emperors.

**RAF**

Yes.

**DAVID**

Who are going; "Am I doing it right? Am I doing it right, like this?!"

**RAF**

By this, the, the end of the, the empire, the, the Roman Empire fractures into two and the, the eastern half becomes the, uh, the Ottoman Empire and the Western half becomes the Holy Roman empire. Which the joke is always, it wasn't holy or Roman or an empire.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**RAF**

So, and yes, it's the, the emperors of the, the Holy Roman from that lasts for, for quite a long time.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

But yeah, absolutely. But before the hundreds of years down the line from this series before Mithras meets its end, absolutely, Christianity is perceived as a well cause it is a, a sect of Judaism, right. They're kind of, there's not a, a distinction that the Romans are making between Christians and Jews. They're kind of, and also because Christians weren't making that distinction either, you know, that like, that kind of, that separation doesn't really exist yet. So yes, it's all a very organic kind of growth of sects and cults out of sect and cults and...

**LOWRI**

Yeah. And then some get very big.

**RAF**

And so some blow up, you know?

**DAVID**

Some do good box office. Yeah.

**RAF**

[laugh]

**LOWRI**

I feel like I should have learned this in school, but because there are so many gods and things, do we know how people, well one, how they worship, but how you decided which God, like, did you worship them all? Is it normal that everyone would be in a kind of cult?

**DAVID**

I think it's sort of, well I mean you've got sort of a pantheon of gods and then, I mean, it certainly integrates, so you have like pantheon of gods, you have gods full of different towns, different cities, different activities, et cetera. And there are gods for practically everything. But I think there are gods that everyone broadly follows. But there, yeah, I think there would be certain gods, the ones that are relevant to what you do. I mean, if you're a soldier, there'd be certain gods. I imagine if you are a soldier, you'd be quite keen on Mars. But then he, the cult of Mithras in itself is actually very, uh, a lot of soldiers particularly like that cult. So there must be something about Mithras. I mean there's all that

bull killing I guess, so they quite like that and the silly hats. But there are a lot of gods, most of whom are imported.

And as Rome expands and then conquers other territories rather than stamping out religions, as Raf said, they just kind of go, yeah, you can carry on worshipping that god. I mean, we'll re we'll do a bit of editing so it's a little bit more Roman, there off you go and carry on. Because they go, there's no point in, in interfering with their customs unnecessarily if they're just going to happy to do what we tell them, they can worship whatever they want. And then it kind of ends up feeding back into Rome and then Roman citizens start going, that's quite a good God. I like that one.

**RAF**

In Bath in the uk. So Bath was a, a Roman, it's called Bath cause it's named after the Roman baths.

**LOWRI**

Oh yeah, of course.

**RAF**

The, the Romans built there and the Roman name for it was Aqvai Svlis, which, um, is the waters of Sulis. Sulis was a local goddess and, and she was a local goddess, so sort of, uh, a British goddess. And then, but the, the Romans went, she's actually Minerva who's the, the goddess of, of wisdom. Anyway you can carry on calling her Sulis, you can carry on worshipping her, but, but just know that she's, she's actually...

**LOWRI**

Just FYI.

**RAF**

FYI, she's actually the Roman god Minerva. So yeah, they were doing this all over. But the other thing that you'd have as well is the Lares who were the family gods. So each home would have a little shrine to, and they're almost like more like spirits than gods, but it was sort of, you know, pray to the Lares, or Lares (different pronunciation) to protect the family, this domestic unit specifically.

**DAVID**

Yeah. And you've got things like, uh, you know, trying to tell the future by which direction an eagle flies or looking at the entrails of animals or, there's a lot of that kind of thing as well. And it's all taken, you know, very seriously. Like before we go and fight in a war, let's do this and make sure that the gods are on our side. And of course it's easy to, to think that, you know, if you have a predetermined result you want, you can interpret the things however you want. But it is still also baked into big decision making. There are occasional references to this in Cry Havoc as it goes on. But it's, it's not, I say it's still not very prevalent in the series, which is a bit of a choice I guess, because partly it, I'm not particularly religious myself.

I have no religious conviction. So when I'm thinking of characters, it's quite low down the things. I think, oh yes, that. But mainly it's because it, as a comedy and as a comedy where I want the characters to be as relatable as possible, having a lot of sort of, um, practice that seem a bit odd to us, sort of, I don't want to stop and sort of, you know, relatable, relatable, you know, drinking to, and then suddenly this weird thing. Yeah. It, it, it's, I want these characters to

be relatable and I also don't want to fall into the trap of "oh look at these funny religious practices. Aren't they silly for being a bit weird and different?"

**LOWRI**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

I think it works here very much cause on the whole, the sort of the cult of Mithras, but the way that Raf has sort of transformed into that kind of drinking club thing. cause there's a very much in a modern equivalence to pull upon there. But, um, Romans, you know, sitting there and worshipping Venus or worshipping Mars and it, you know, doing something art doesn't quite fit into the story of Rome, it's a comedy series set in ancient Rome rather than a series about ancient Rome.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. We don't know that they're not doing that off screen.

**DAVID**

They could be doing it all the time.

**RAF**

Yeah, exactly.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

It's also the, this way of looking at cults in this episode. It's a very Terry Pratchett way of -

**DAVID**

[laughs] Yes.

**RAF**

- looking at it as well is realising the other big influence on that episode in the way that sort of Terry Pratchett is very, very good at presenting something so instantly recognisable, just abstracting it a little bit into a, a fantasy world. But yeah, this is my, my Terry Pratchett take on both cults and drinking societies. And then, and the other space in the episode, which is completely a-historical is with Cleopatra and Fulvia having a drink and they're in a sort of what I imagined to be the Roman equivalent of a sort of all female as a sort of counterpoint to the all male Mithras cults a sort of all male private members club, a very sort of yeah, sort of girl boss members club.

And that absolutely didn't exist, uh, in ancient Rome

**ALL**

[laugh]

**RAF**

Cause even, you know, rich women, the lives of rich women, they were, were expected to at least present themselves as being, oh, I'm, I'm interested in weaving and you know, and sitting quietly and, you know, chastity and virtue are these hugely prized virtues for Roman women, which then is completely at

odds with what we historically know of, of women like Fulvia who absolutely were, you know, running their own schemes, uh, and and so on. So yes, sadly there's no, there's no, uh, Roman like women's club, um, that didn't exist. Um, and I, I can't remember what it's ever said in the episode, but I think I put in the stage directions that it's called Juno's Cock. The, the wine bar that they go to, which is a mythological reference.

**DAVID**

Yep.

**RAF**

Juno, the goddess Juno, who is Hera in Greek mythology, has peacocks.

**DAVID**

Ah.

**LOWRI**

Brilliant.

**RAF**

So that was my joke that maybe mercifully didn't end up...

**LOWRI**

There have been a lot of phalluses in the backstage episodes and I think I'm OK with it.

**RAF**

I mean the Romans wore penises as protective charms. They were everywhere.

**LOWRI**

Great.

**RAF**

You know, very into protective charms, little charms, you wear as necklaces and some of the most common ones were penises very often that had wings and bells on them. [laughs]

**LOWRI**

Fantastic.

**DAVID**

[laugh]

**LOWRI**

Oh, usually I will use a penis as a segue, but I can't right now. I'm going I'm going to to to ask though, cause we touched on women and spoiler, if you haven't listened to episode seven, you should do that. Where did the decision come from to have Octavia be the secretly the grand, grand master? Is that what she's called?

**DAVID**

The Pate- yeah the Pater?

**LOWRI**

The Pater. The Pater of course.

**RAF**

Um, I thought it would be funny.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**LOWRI**

Yeah. Good. I I thought it might have been that [laugh].

**RAF**

[Laughs] That's mainly, I I, I'd already come up with the thing of like, oh they're going to get into this, this society and then find out, um, it doesn't have these fabled riches at all obviously and actually they'll end up footing the bill for the next one and um, yeah, I, I needed something to do with, with Octavia I think in, in the episode and um, I thought it would be funny as well to have Gaius who sort of like I've been searching for years.

**LOWRI**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

To find this cult and then in Octavia's like [laughs] I found it in a week.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

I think originally there was a one of the plots, cause we had Gaius and Mark are doing with the cult and Fulvia and Cleopatra having drinks there and originally there was also another plot of Octavia and Charmian going on a date and Octavia thinking,

**RAF**

Yes.

**DAVID**

That she might be worrying about. She was going to be really dull and you know, typical Roman woman, you know, just at these old posh women's parties and no, look I'm more than that. Look, here's a thing I can show you. And she was going to take Charmian and, and at the end reveal to Charmian, look I'm also so in charge of this cult. But it was because the episode there was so much material and I thought, you know, we've got a lot of Octavia and Charmian material in the episode surrounding it.

**RAF**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

The cult is going to take a bit of time and Fulvia and Cleopatra is kind of a USP of the episode, so we've, and that's why Charmian is sort of running away at the beginning and doesn't really turn up again until the end. I said to Raf, I'm sorry you've wrote these lovely scenes, can we cut them? Because we just don't have enough space. But can we then expand on these ones here?

**RAF**

And I, and I wept and howled and then I went, oh no you're right.

**LOWRI**

[laugh]

**DAVID**

You did, but I didn't want to cut and of the Fulvia and Cleopatra scenes. I thought well, those two characters won't meet again for a little while I think so let's, let's let's maximise that.

**RAF**

I was also just aware as well that with Fulvia, you know, all the stuff that she says about herself in those scenes is true.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

And we went, you know, we'd been waiting a few episodes now I think to kind of get her, her backstory.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

Almost. So, so yes, I was very, very happy to get that in and to get in some of the Cleopatra married her brothers and you know, had to kill all of her siblings on the way to the throne and, and get all of that in. So, so yes.

**LOWRI**

It's a very pleasing pairing as well, I think Fulvia and Cleopatra.

**RAF**

Yes.

**LOWRI**

Like it's a very, oh, we've kind of come full circle cause we started talking about that scene and now we are, I we are going to have to be at the end of the episode even though I want to keep talking. Er, I'm going to ask one more question that we have to answer quickly. Did they actually go in for human sacrifice? Do we know that Romans?

**DAVID**

Very rare.

**RAF**

I don't think so. You know, it's the kind of, you know, how how was practised at some points in some religions that probably fed into Rome or, but there's certainly, there's no like what evidence of it being a widespread thing at all. So, but I took it an educated guess. But the thing that happens in the episode of like, oh you have to kind of pretend to do a human sacrifice. I wouldn't be surprised if that was, cause this is the thing that happens in religion all the time if like an actual ritual gets replaced with a symbolic version of it.

**LOWRI**

Mmm, oh yeah yeah, good point.

**DAVID**

It's sort of seems antithetical to... I think it's where the Romans also, they are very sort of concerned of, say like the Druids for instance. Cause they go, oh those Druids, those people who do human sacrifice and the Romans sort of assume that any sort of religious group who aren't them are doing human sacrifices and are very worried about that. I think it's one that they're actually quite worried about a number of the cults because they are quite shadowy and secret. And even if a lot of Romans are at them, they don't know what's going on in there and they're not controlled directly by the state religion and the state religion is all over the place. He goes, look, we if you want religion, we've got it, we've got all this stuff going on, why are you going to go over there to that party? So human sacrifice is something that they would very much detest, but because it's uh, it's exactly the sort of thing that you might go to a a, a secret cult and then be read and think, I wonder if they do human sacrifice. I've heard they do. And then they go, oh God, they're doing a human sacrifice.

**LOWRI**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

Oh no. And Raf said "can I have a human sacrifice and this?" I said, "Yeah. Go on then".

**RAF**

Yeah!

**LOWRI**

Go on, have two actually.

**DAVID**

Yeah. Yeah.

**RAF**

And just yeah, a nice, a nice opportunity to have a little like fundamental Mark and Gaius difference.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

A tease of an interesting difference.

**LOWRI**

Mmm. Yeah. Actually that is a nice character moment for both of them.

**DAVID**

Yeah. I really like Raf had Mark as you know, he was going to have to like say, no, I don't, I don't do this, but the, the person who has done lots of killing before on the battlefield refuses to do it here because this is not how you do it. And he go, that's good. Mark is the sort of, you know, slightly sort of, uh, the slacker sort of like high high school jock character, but he's got certain things he very much rigidly believes in. He goes, no, I don't, so far and no further. And Gaius is the person who's still forming what his identity is in this Roman world is the one who's slightly more likely to contemplate it.

**LOWRI**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

And we sort of play with that.

**LOWRI**

Through, um, doing like prep for these episodes. I've been seeing more and more little character moments of Gaius like the hints at who he will become after the series.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**LOWRI**

But yeah, it's, it's interesting.

**RAF**

Yeah, cause Augustus was a phenomenally successful.

**DAVID**

Yeah.

**RAF**

So there is, oh it's, it's, it is very, very interesting working on something that is not exactly an origin story but is sort of going well at some point down the road.

**LOWRI**

Yeah, yeah.

**DAVID**

[laugh]

**RAF**

He's going to become Darth Vader. So, y'know! [laugh]

**DAVID**

Yes!

**LOWRI**

[laugh] Right, on Darth Vader, I am going to wrap us up. Thank you everyone for listening and I will see you next week. Goodbye everyone.

**ALL**

Bye. Bye.

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

Hosted and Produced by Lowri Ann Davies

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