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Augustus: Godfather of Europe

Richard Holland

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The Emperor Augustus, ruler of the Roman Empire during the forty-four years that included the birth of Christ, was born a plebeian and brought up in a backwater. So how did this small-town outsider reach the pinnacle of Roman society and become a founding father of Western civilisation?

As Julius Caesar's adopted son, Augustus burst into the political arena after the Ides of March, provoked civil war to avenge Caesar's murder, and became Rome's first teenage consul. While pretending to restore the Roman Republic he made himself absolute monarch. Worshipped as a god, Augustus presided over a 'golden age' of literature and architecture, and brought unprecedented peace and prosperity to a huge section of mankind - unintentionally clearing a path for the future spread of Christianity to a world disfigured by slavery and sadistic spectacle.

But what of the man himself? Richard Holland reveals the many faces of Augustus - the reckless lover who abducted Livia, a married woman pregnant by her husband, to be his third wife; the father who sent his only child, Julia, to a prison island for immorality; and the merciful despot who broke his disloyal secretary's legs but saved the life of a boy slave. The biography sets Augustus in the context of his time, among a motley cast of characters including Caesar, Mark Antony, Cleopatra, Cicero, Brutus, Virgil and Herod the Great.

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