

21st June 2024

**The Venus of Salò** by Ben Pastor – WW2 mystery set in Northern Italy.



In October 1944 Colonel Martin Bora of the Wehrmacht is posted to North Italy, to the Republic of Salò. He has been severely wounded fighting partisans, and is reluctantly given his new posting. He should be safer there. The Republic is the last fascist stronghold in the country as the Allies move up from the South.

A major painting, owned by a local dignitary, is stolen with remarkable ease from his house. It is a very valuable portrait of Venus by Titian. Bora is given the job of tracking it down and restoring it to its owner. But the mystery of the painting's whereabouts is not all that concerns him. Three dead bodies also appear. Bora is embroiled in discovering what has happened to them. He also finds himself embroiled in German / Italian military politics and hounded by the Gestapo. He falls hopelessly in love with a real live 'Venus' (the daughter of the owner of the painting). Matters are more than complicated.

He must navigate his way through the maze, and come out on the other side – with the perpetrator of the theft identified, and his life still intact.

*The Venus of Salò* is a very well written book. It captures both the complexities of the region and the times in which it is set. The characters of both the German and Italian officers ring true. It is a truly fascinating period of history about which, I confess, I knew next to nothing. The story is fiction, but the background is all based on fact. *The Venus of Salò* is the eighth book in the Martin Bora series. The series has rightly earned Ben Pastor the title of ‘the queen of the historical thriller’.

*The Venus of Salò* is a quite complex and not altogether easy read, but it is worth the effort.

**Tony for the TripFiction team**