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In View of the Walls

Sheila J North

The swaying of the yellow-headed flowers is soothing. Had they already been planted when I first came here, I might have found their constant motion irritating, for that was when I, too, was always on the move. These days, the bustle of the flowers bothers me no more than that of the city itself, changed as it is from when I first knew it.

The spring that brings the flowers also brings the lovers who stop and kiss, holding up the flow of the tourists who gape over the wall at the daffodils below, cameras dangling dangerously from their hands or their arching necks. Most are attracted by the sight of the Gothic towers that spear the nearby sky. A few stop to admire the wall itself, and that is good.

If only I, too, had admired the wall. But, even as my feet tired of constant marching, so my hands (and arms, and legs, and back) grew weary of the never-ending fortifying and building. At least, that was the excuse I gave Falvius, for suggesting a quiet hour or two gambling here on the grass, a short distance from Eboracum.

How should I describe Flavius? Friend? Fellow soldier in the Ninth Legion? How about "poor loser"? I still think all might have gone well if only he had left his sword behind.

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I did. It's hard to defend yourself when you're armed only with a flask of wine, especially when half the contents are inside you.

I wonder became of Flavius. I wonder, too, if someday, an eager archaeologist, tired of Jorvik and its Vikings, may thrust an inquisitive trowel into this green-and-yellow mound. He'll have to dig pretty deep to find the gaming pieces, and me.

I've long ceased to wonder why I'm still here. The flowers are restful, and the tourists amusing, especially when they drop their cameras in fright.