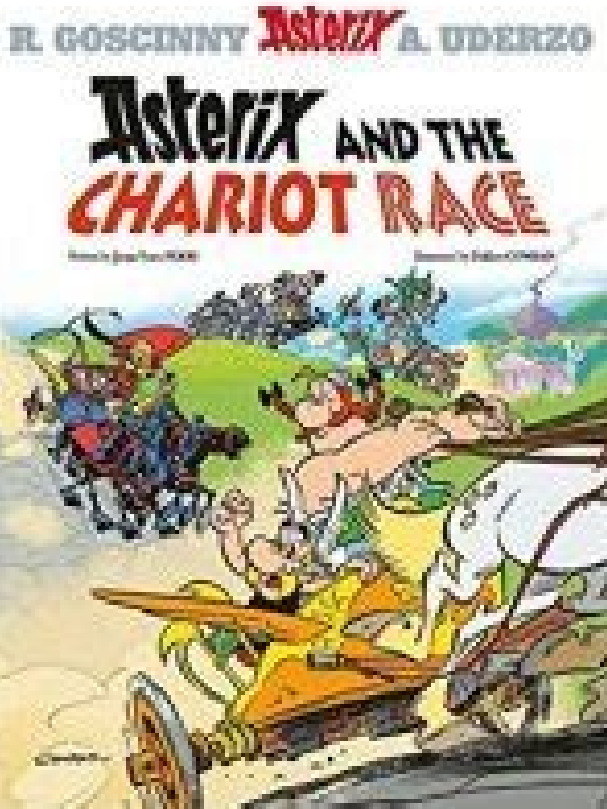
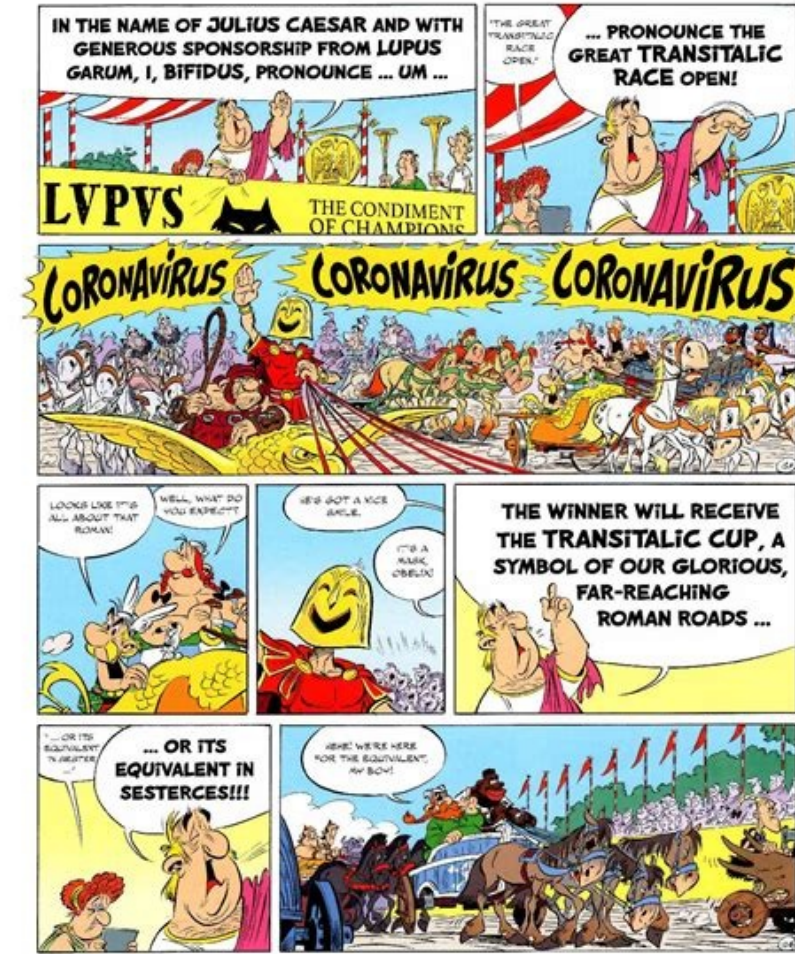
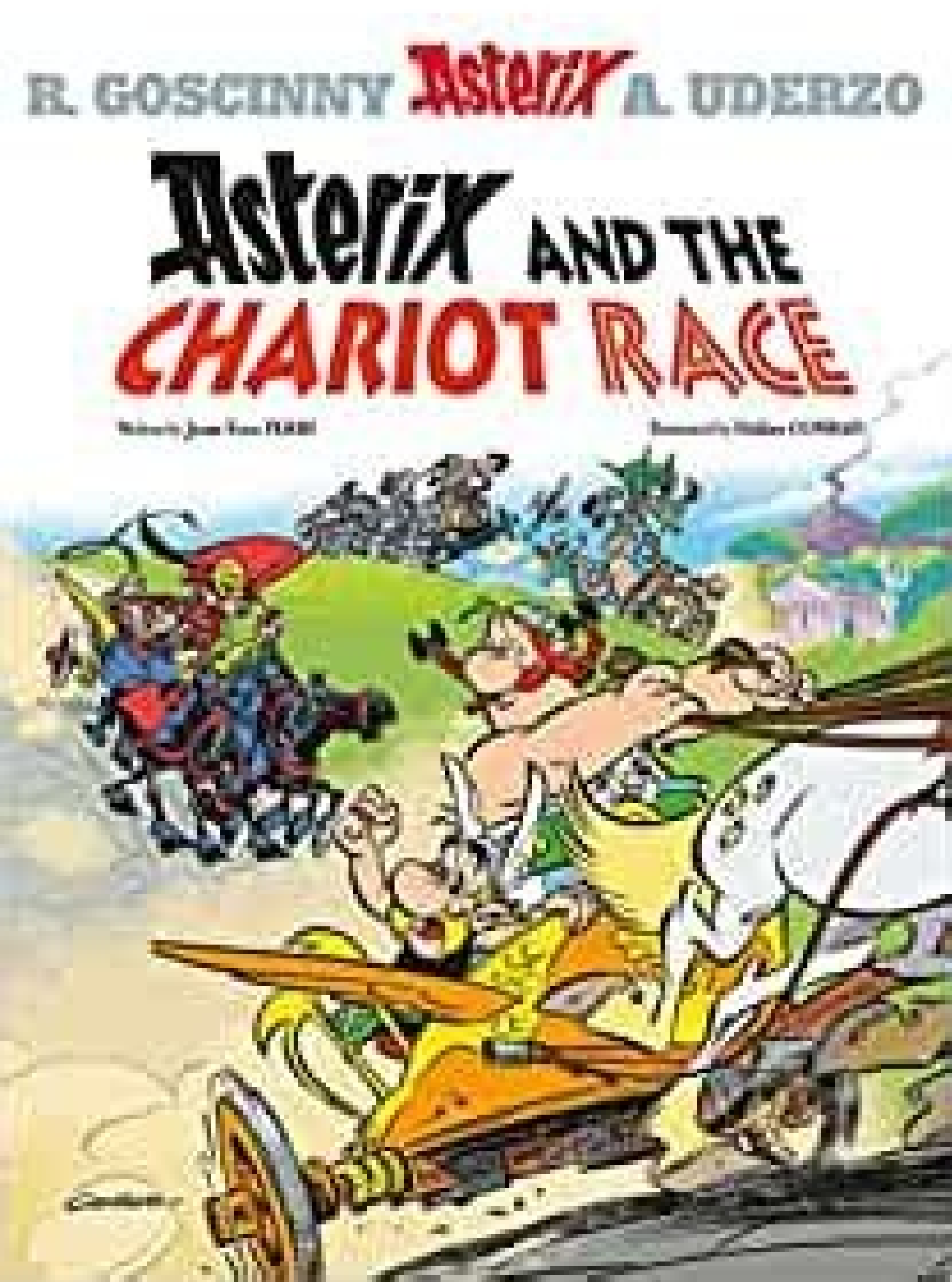


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Asterix and the Chariot Race (Astérix et la Transitalique)SeriesAsterixCreative teamWritersJean-Yves FerriArtistsDidier ConradOriginal publicationDate of publication19 October 2017LanguageFrenchISBN978-2-86497-327-0978-2-86497-328-7 (Version luxe)TranslationPublisherOrion Children's BooksDate2017ISBN978-1-5101-0401-3TranslatorAdriana HunterChronologyPreceded byAsterix and the Missing ScrollFollowed byAsterix and the Chieftain's Daughter Asterix and the Chariot Race (French: Astérix et la Transitalique, "Asterix and the Trans-Italic") is the 37th book in the Asterix series, and the third to be written by Jean-Yves Ferri and illustrated by Didier Conrad. The book was released worldwide in more than 20 languages on 19 October 2017 with an initial print run of 5 million copies.[1][2] Plot Responding to criticism of the "deplorable" condition of Roman roads in the regions, Senator Lactus Bifidus proposes a chariot race across the Italic Peninsula to showcase the "excellent" roads. The race is open to all people of the known world. Julius Caesar endorses the race but insists that a Roman must win for the sake of unity across the Italic Peninsula. Otherwise, Bifidus will be banished and exiled to Cyrenaica (now Libya). In Gaul, Asterix and Obelix are taking Geriatrix to a dentist at a market in Doriortum, when a sibyl predicts Obelix will become a champion charioteer. Obelix then buys a sports chariot on credit, quits his menhir business and joins the trans-Italic race, accompanied by Asterix and Dogmatix. Over the course of the race, they encounter a range of competitors from other lands, as well as the people and cuisines of Ancient Italy. Their most important rival is the masked Coronavirus. Only five teams manage to complete the race, with the two Gauls narrow victors over Julius Caesar, who had secretly joined the race as a replacement masked Coronavirus in an effort to save Rome's honor. Weary of the frantic pace of chariot racing, Obelix gives the trophy to Asterix, who hands it over to the Kushite team, who in turn give it to the Sarmatians. The trophy ends up with the perennially late Lusitanian team, who request the equivalent in sesterces. Obelix then declares he wants to return home and resume making menhirs. Competitors Team Drivers Chariot motif Result Additional information Gauls Obelix and Asterix Gallic rooster 1st – Winners Horses stolen from Romans in return for four menhirs. Bretons Madmax and Ecotax Lions Retired Chariot sabotaged on leaving Parma. Lusitanians Bitovamess and Undaduress Fish 5th Although always late due to chariot maintenance, and despite finishing fifth, they end up with the trophy. Kushites Princesses Nefersaynefer and Kweenlatifer Cheetah hieroglyph 2nd Zebras pull their chariot. Kweenlatifer falls in love with Dogmatix. Romans Coronavirus and Bacillus; Julius Caesar Aquila Retired The favorite, Coronavirus (real name Testus Terone), quits the race upon learning his co-driver cheated. Replaced by Julius Caesar, who almost wins but is immobilized by a pot-hole. Pirates Redbeard and Lookout Jolly roger Retired They sink in marshes of Venexia. Cimbrí Zerogluten and Betakaroten Moose skull and antlers Retired Slaves of Bifidus, they sabotage many other chariots with the aim of ensuring victory for the Roman team. Eliminated when Obelix crushes their chariot. Sarmatians Tekaloadv and Wotaloadov Bear 3rd Greeks Yudabos and Attalos Golden fleece 4th Normans Skinnidecaf and Gamefralaf Shields Retired Quit the race because of homesickness due to good weather and civilization. Persians[3] Unnamed Bull Retired Eliminated due to sabotage. There are several other teams, including a Belgian named Outinthatstix and his compatriot, two competitors who resemble Hells Angels, two Goths in a wolf-motif chariot, as well as Helvetians, Ligurians, Etruscans, and Calabrians. There is even an Arab team with dromedaries and a Nordic team on a sled. Caricatures and references Some of the characters in the book are obvious caricatures of real-life people. The innkeeper in Parma resembles opera singer Luciano Pavarotti, while the famous Roman masked charioteer Coronavirus is modeled on racing driver Alain Prost, and the garum tycoon Lupus is modeled on former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.[4] French media noted that Nefersaynefer and Kweenlatifer resemble Venus and Serena Williams.[5] Reviewers also noted a waitress at the roadside inn in Tibur resembles Italian actress Sophia Loren.[6] On page 24, the man sketching the race resembles Leonardo da Vinci. The statues and the mysterious beauty with the charming smile which Asterix and Obelix encounter in Florencia (Florence) are a nod to the city's later significance as the center and birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. The scenes in Sena Julia, where the racers are going in a circle searching for an inn, are a reference to the Palo di Siena and the Piazza del Campo. While passing Pompeii, Obelix temporarily forestalls a catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Reception On Goodreads, Asterix and the Chariot Race has a score of 3.48 out of 5.[7] Comics Review said the book is "furiously funny and hilariously jam-packed with and timeless jibes and cracking contemporary swipes"[8] The book received renewed media attention in 2020 amid the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (COVID-19) pandemic because the charioteer favored to win the race goes by the name Coronavirus[9] and wears a face mask. Notes The English edition is the first Asterix album to be translated by Adriana Hunter, following the retirement of long-time translator Anthea Bell. At the end of the book, there is a message of thanks to Bell from the publishers for "her wonderful translation work on Asterix over the years".[10] On page 24, Asterix and Obelix pass a group of Gaulish tourists with a "house-wagon". This type of conveyance previously appeared in Asterix in Spain (1969). On the race map, the city of Parma is marked with a leg of ham, which is in modern times one of its most famous exports. On page 40, a Helvetian friend of Asterix and Obelix from Asterix in Switzerland makes a cameo appearance. Beyond the Roman roadblock, Asterix and Obelix encounter "two indomitable Umbrians". The Umbri (as they were originally called) were conquered by Rome in 260 BC, and thus are an Italic counterpart of Asterix and his Gaulish companions The Kushite princesses speaking only in hieroglyphs is probably a reference to the kingdom of Kush once belonging to the Egyptian empire. References ^ "Asterix creator Albert Uderzo turns 90". Deutsche Welle. 25 April 2017. Retrieved 20 July 2017. ^ Johnston, Rich. "'Asterix' Sets A 5 Million Print Run For Its First Printing". No. 20 July 2017. Bleeding Cool. Retrieved 22 July 2017. ^ Jort, Marion (9 October 2017). "'Astérix et la Transitalique': le méchant du nouveau tome est un virus". Le Huffington Post SAS. Retrieved 27 December 2017. ^ Asterix et la Transitalique : Ferri et Conrad toujours attendus au tournant, Le Figaro 20 October 2017 (in French). Accessed on 27 October 2017. ^ Younés, Monique (19 October 2017). "'Astérix et la Transitalique' : le nouvel album des irréductibles Gaulois". RTL. 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It's exactly what I was afraid would happen when I came into this "Redux" series of reviews: I found the book I thought less of... Chariot of Credits Writers: Jean-Yves FerriArtist: Didier ConradColorist:Thierry Mebarkiletterer: Arvind ShahTranslator: Adriana HunterPublished by: Hachette/OrionNumber of Pages: 48Original Publication: 2017 A Tour of Italy For all the times Asterix visited Italy or Caesar, he never spent time outside of Rome. That threw me when I started this book. It felt weird to be doing another tour of Italy, but then I realized Asterix hadn't done that before. Crazy, eh? Jean-Yves Ferri has an Italian politician stage a chariot race along the entire length of Italy to prove that his roads are in fine shape and the best of Europe. Complaints of the potholes are lies, he says. Italy is superior to everyone else, dagnabli! The scene at the beginning where the politician is goaded into creating this race is very funny. I like the writing from Ferri but especially the acting from Conrad in it. The look on the politician's face when he realizes what he's done is hilarious. That's something I appreciated throughout this book: just how much Conrad animates these characters. Follow their gestures and their facial expressions and you'll see how he's careful to emphasize every moment in the book with just the right physical presence of these characters. They act, even in those so-called "quieter" moments. And after some juggling and moving plot pieces into place, Ferri gets Asterix and Obelix into the right place to want to take part in the race. There's the first problem: Their interest in participating in the race comes coincidentally just as Obelix decides he wants to learn to ride a chariot. If the announcement of the race caused Obelix to want to learn the chariot, then the plot would feel much more pro-active instead of reactive. Not a good start. From there, it's a multitude of nations racing their chariots in stages, much like the Tour De France. It's a bit of an episodic tale, with mini-adventures in each stage of the race. We get some in-jokes at the Italians' expense, some historic humor, and Luciano Pavarotti. We meet lots of people from lots of nations, all of whom are destined to fall by the wayside. Cannon fodder is always easy to spot. It doesn't come together enough for me. The main plot of the race, if you can call it that, is following how the Italians are trying to rig the race in their own favor. It's blatantly obvious something is going on when every other nation's chariot has malfunctions in every leg of the race, but nobody suspects anything. They just assume the masked Italian racer, Coronavirus, has the home field advantage. I guess. Willful ignorance is a strange hobby. Obelix, at one point, is a witness to the conspiracy. He doesn't realize what's going on and never reports it. That's a dead end plot point. There's no follow-up to it. It's not like Obelix later feels guilty for missing it and so plows ahead in full fighting mode. There's no cause and effect here. It's all cause. I suppose that's the thing that bothers me about the book now. It's pointless. Granted, this is Asterix and often the plot comes secondary to the hilarity, but the best books mix the two well. Yes, we get some nice gags here and a lot of funny names, plus the return of many nations to the pages of Asterix, but the plot that is supposed to hold all that together is paper thin. Very little is done to counter the effects of the conspiracy against anyone. The Gauls' entry into the race, itself, is done from convenience, instead of forward action. And the "villain" of the story only gets away with it because everyone else acts stupid enough to not realize he's doing anything. In the end — spoilers! — the race is lost by the Italians from something of their own doing, and not any action Asterix or anyone from any of the other nations does. I suppose there's sweet irony in that, but as a reader it feels too easy. Yes, Ferri plays this plot point honestly. It's set up at the beginning of the book and pays off at a most convenient time. That's working on his side. But the end result isn't as satisfying as it might have otherwise been. Let's Talk More About That Ending and The Mask The biggest letdown with this book is the ending, which also helps explain the most curious part of the first half of the book: Why is the Italian charioteer in a mask, anyway? What possible reason is there for that? Why bother? So I need to spoil all of that to discuss it. If you haven't read the book yet, skip ahead to the next section now. The whole point of masking the charioteer for Italy is because it provides cover for Julius Caesar to come in at the end to attempt to win the race. The final reveal that it's Caesar under the mask this time instead of some hapless Italian associate is a big twist. But I had to read through the first three quarters of the book wondering why the rider had a mask in the first place. Was it some kind of commentary on superheroes? Or wrestling? Anything??? When the mask is stripped off and the identity of the charioteer is discovered the first time, we just don't care. The character was never set up in any way. He's just an Italian man with conflicted feelings about his participation in the race. That part makes him interesting, but if you set up a needlessly masked character, there needs to be a reason for that mask. Usually, it's a revelation of who's underneath. The first time he's revealed, there's still no good reason. There's a good reason the second time, and it's one which honestly surprised me the first time I read it. Still, it feels like an awful lot of work to go through to get there. There's misdirection and then there's just jerking the reader around. I remember when they announced this book to the press a couple of years ago, they had someone dressed

up as Coronavirus as the event. (You can see the picture in my write-up of that press conference.) Were they trying to create a superhero type of atmosphere with this book? Was this an attempt to create a new villain in the mold of a Darth Vader or a Doctor Doom or, as I pointed out at the time, Doctor Bong? Maybe this is something that got lost in translation? I looked up "ancient Rome masks" on Google, and found that full head masks were used in the theater as a means of amplifying the voice and providing a visual cue for the people sitting in the back. But those were not made of heavy metal material like Coronavirus' appears to be. So this isn't an historical reference. It feels like a misfire to me. Best Name of the Book I don't think there's a single volume of "Asterix" that packs itself with as many funny names as this one. I gave up listing them all about halfway through reading this book. I think I have to go with the chariot dealer named Turbocatalitix. I give runner up credit to names like Tiramisus, Bioethix (the dentist), Dolcevita, and Outinthastix. And let's not forget Tekaloadov, Zerogluten, and Betakeroten. So many good names... Introducing Adriana Hunter This is a good debut for the new translator, Adriana Hunter. In my original review of the book a year and a half ago, I mentioned that she had taken over for the retired Anthea Bell, who gratefully was still with us. Sadly, Bell died last year. She translated an awful lot of stuff in her lifetime, including some things she took a weekend to learn the language for. But she'll be best remembered for her work on Asterix, no doubt. Hunter has ridiculously big shoes to fill on here, but her debut is an auspicious one. I can't give you a line-for-line review of the rabbits she pulled out of her hat to make the original French version of the book read so well in English. It's enough for me that it doesn't feel translated. It reads naturally, and is very funny from all its angles, including the Dad-joke-level names and puns. I'm sure lots of people read this book without ever realizing that the change happened. I hope Hunter returns for "Asterix and the Chieftain's Daughter." Is It Better than "Asterix and the Picts"? This is a hard question for me to answer. "Picts" gets a little bit of grace for being the debut of Ferri and Conrad. Even reading it at the time, you could sense they were feeling their way around the world still. They tested some waters to see what the right combination of things was. They wanted to include a Village plot and an "Asterix and Obelix travel to another country" plot. They also included a Loch Ness Monster type of cute creature, and the green villain guy who I worried at first was meant to something supernatural. It also had a census taker in the village who served no purpose besides one bad piece of misdirection. This book has a different set of problems, but most of them come straight from the main plot. It's more a series of gags loosely punctuated by an unexciting plot than anything else. I can't complain too much about the characterizations of the characters or the art. Those are great. I guess this one might be more disappointing if only because it's their third book together. By now, I'd expect some of those rough edges to be sanded down. Plus, the second book, "Asterix and the Missing Scroll," was so good that I thought they had figured things out. If someone who had never read Asterix before asked me to choose between the two books, I'd choose between whether they'd be more interested in the romance at the center of "Picts" or the national travelogue at the center of "Chariot." Or, if they are artist-centric, I'd send them straight to "Chariot." Conrad draws his tail off with this book. There are so many scenes of horses pulling chariots in crowded panels.... Those would have broken many an American artist. Recommended? It's not a great book, but it has its moments. It has all of the decorations without the Christmas tree underneath, so to speak. It's the first book from the new creative team that I thought lesser of, having read the entire series now. I'd recommend "Asterix and the Missing Scroll" over this one, but this still has enough raw material in it to be entertaining and worth your time. The good news is, we'll see Ferri and Conrad taking another swing at the Gauls in the fall... Buy It Now Digitally, the book is available in Europe in English through Izneo: But you can still buy the physical books through Amazon:

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