



The Legate's Daughter

Wallace Breem

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The scene is Rome in the troublesome year 24 B.C. Emperor Augustus is in ill health and the city is seething with intrigue. There is speculation about the succession, uncertainty in the capital and unrest on the frontiers. Julia. She is married to Marcellus, marking the young man with the Emperor's favour, but some disagree with the match. Powerful rivals engineer crisis and conspiracy. gambler, and a man dissatisfied with life. He comes to the attention of Augustus's lieutenant, Marcus Agrippa, who leads Curtius into the puzzling affair of the legate's daughter, kidnapped, it appears, by pirates and held in captivity in the African desert.

The Legate's Daughter Details

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From Reader Review The Legate's Daughter for online ebook

Ben Kane says

It's been a number of years since I read Breem's first class novel, Eagle in the Snow - EITS. That book ranks in my top five historical fiction novels, alongside titles such as The Lantern Bearers by Sutcliff, Hawk Quest by Lyndon and Tyrant by Cameron. While I didn't expect The Legate's Daughter to be as good as EITS - no one can maintain brilliance consistently - I did expect it to be better than it was.

It's the story of two individuals, Curtius Rufus and Criton, both men who for one reason or another, live near the bottom of the social scale. Breem paints wonderfully vibrant scenes of their existence in Rome - better than almost any other writer I can think of. Theirs is a world of innkeepers and shop owners, government officials, charioteers and slaves; the high and mighty appear from time to time, but only to reinforce Rufus' and Criton's feelings of helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds.

What's not to like then? Well, in a phrase, it's the lack of editing. Page after page of dialogue is wrecked by word repetition (two cases of 'endless' in the same paragraph is one instance) and the extreme overuse of adverbs. I'm no stranger to these words as an author, but when characters are, for example, saying 'lightly' and then within a sentence or two, saying 'bluntly', it all becomes too much. There was even one instance of a man inclining his head 'silently'. As my editor once asked me, how else does someone incline their head? The editor's pen appears to have passed far too lightly over this novel.

As other reviewers have commented, there's a lot to commend in the book - I particularly liked the uncertainty of the ending. To me, however, it feels like a draft of a novel that needed several more sweeps and rewrites before being ready to publish. Three and a half stars out of five. It's a shame.

Keith says

It wasn't long enough. Certain parts of the book did not add to the plot or the background. It felt like I was just reading "filler." Other than that, it was OK.

Francis Hagan says

There is an addictive quality to the writing in this novel that is in complete contrast to the addictive quality in his other Roman work - The Eagle in the Snow. Whereas the latter novel is a tense and gripping action-driven narrative about the last days of the Roman Empire in the West, this one is a different beast entirely - and all the better for it. Here, the protagonist Curtius Rufus drifts slowly into a deadly conspiracy which threatens the Roman state itself all the while Octavian Augustus moves closer to his death bed. The story is simple - he is tasked to travel to North Africa and attempt to learn the whereabouts of a missing legate's daughter - supposedly kidnapped by pirates off the coast. All is not as it seems - as in all good political thrillers - and Curtius must use his wits to survive a perilous adventure. What strikes a reader immediately is that Breem refuses to spell out the background to the events Curtius finds himself embroiled in (along with his good friend Criton). Meetings are always veiled in allusion and in many moments, Curtius himself is lost and unsure of what is happening. However, if you read carefully and look out for the nuances, this novel

becomes absorbing and very tense. The joy of it is both the unusual setting - it is refreshing to read a Roman novel that is not all sword fights and ripping muscles - and the gradually-building sense of fear which Breem is able to convey in his writing. So much is hinted and alluded to that to the casual reader this may be off-putting but if you love narrative where you flounder and struggle as much as the protagonist then this will certainly leave you wanting for more.

Jane says

There is something hypnotic about Breem's writing. He really makes you feel you are in the bleak, barren landscape of Mauretania [present day Algeria and Tunisia]. I reread this book several times; each time I picked up some nuance I had not noticed before; or some aspect or sardonic statement became clearer. This novel does not have the quality of *Eagle in the Snow*, but was still very enjoyable -- a diplomatic mission with all that entails vs. preparations for battle and battle scenes. Breem's characters are opaque and somehow veiled, in a metaphorical sense. I preferred the first-person narration in Mr. Breem's earlier book; I got closer to understanding the protagonist. At this point, maybe I'm obtuse, but I do not understand the connection between the kidnapping and a conspiracy against Emperor Augustus.

Right now [several days later from my original review] I'm rereading aloud, slowly, only a few pp. or a section at a time. One really has to read between the lines; so much is not spelled out. Think something cerebral like, say, John Le Carre.

Italo Italophiles says

I found *The Legate's Daughter* to be an intriguing read. Wallace Breem departs from his first book, *Eagle in the Snow*, which shows in intimate detail the skills and character needed to head an Ancient Roman legion at the border of the Empire. Instead, *The Legate's Daughter* shows in intimate detail the skills and characters needed to run a diplomatic mission at the edge of the Ancient Roman Empire, in North Africa.

The reader is put in the position of a diplomat, someone who must collect gossip, read people, and read between the lines in this third-person narrated novel. Nothing is spelled out for the reader. We must move along with the characters and try to cipher out the truth, the good guys and the bad guys from the events, glances, words, sighs, and chance encounters. The book is written in the 3rd person limited style. We get into our protagonist's head, mainly, and a bit into the heads of those around him, especially his best friend.

The book is rich with period detail, so rich that it seems to be written by someone who lived through the events described. No, I mean REALLY lived there. So many historical novels purport to be first person accounts of events and fall short, but we make excuses for the writer, saying "Well, it is set in in a date from before the birth of Christ...". This book has the richness that leaves you feeling that you have visited the times and places described.

Please see my full and illustrated review at Italophile Book Reviews
<http://italophilebookreviews.blogspot...>

Darkpool says

Enjoyed this, but not as much as Eagle in the Snow, which I listened to last year. Breem does a great job of the desolation/back of beyond/edge of empire kind of feel, but I found parts of the story hard to follow - possibly due to having to pay attention to driving rather than listening at critical times! Perhaps I would have had a greater understanding of the subtleties of the plot if I'd been reading it myself rather than listening. Still, I'm disappointed the author didn't write more than just the two books set in the Imperial Rome. I'd love to read more.

Chuck says

The chief strength of this novel is that it gives you a feel for what everyday life must have been like in the world of ancient Rome.

Vicki Cline says

It is 23 BC and Augustus is gravely ill. A problem has cropped up in Africa province - the imperial legate and his wife have been killed and their daughter kidnapped. Agrippa assigns Curtius Rufus to get her back. Curtius takes a group of builders to King Juba in Numidia hoping to get help from him. I didn't really care much for the book. The narrative seemed a bit jerky, with bits being left out for us to infer. And I couldn't figure out the motives of secondary characters like Juba's wife Cleopatra Selene.

Okie says

While I enjoyed the depictions of life during Roman times, I thought the author took far too long, and did a much too inadequate job, setting up the primary action. Nearly half the book is devoted to getting to know the main character Curtius and his life, and the last half is devoted to his mission to rescue the Legate's daughter. There is very little connecting the main character to the Legate's daughter. I was left wondering why Curtius was chosen for this rescue. There is a place in the book where the author tries rather ham-handedly to give us a reason, by having Marcus Agrippa discuss the upcoming rescue mission, and Curtius' fitness for it, with him. Even with this awkward scene, I was left wondering, much like Curtius, why he was chosen and not someone else. I felt the connection between Curtius and the rescue mission would have been better described indirectly, during the half of the book devoted to the study of his life. Both halves of the book seem to have little to do with each other. Perhaps critical elements of the book were left on the cutting room floor, or perhaps the author should have hung on to the manuscript a while longer.

fonz says

Muy diferente a "El ??quila en la nieve" y m??s centrada en las argucias diplom??ticas que en la ??pica militar, "El enviado de Roma" ("La hija del legado", en el original) es una compleja novela que, al principio, se hace muy cuesta arriba: lenta, plagada de elipsis muy bestias, acontecimientos que no se explican

claramente, bruscos diálogos que abundan en referencias que el lector desconoce, un final que deja multitud de cabos sueltos... Pero nada de todo esto es gratuito. Breem, como ya hizo en "El guerrero en la nieve" y su austerioridad militar, adopta el estilo que mejor se ajusta a su descripción de los delicados engranajes de la Historia; como las peripecias más insignificantes, las de la gente corriente, mueven dichos engranajes. Y como la misma Historia, tal y como la percibimos los mindundis que la sufrimos día a día, no es más que una serie de acontecimientos difusos como los mensajes cifrados que recibe Curcio desde Roma, acontecimientos de los que desconocemos sus motivos y sobre los que no tenemos el más mínimo control. Un sendero por el que avanzamos a tientas como mejor podemos, donde incluso los momentos de triunfo resultan insatisfactorios y carentes de sentido.

Por otro lado, la ambientación es excepcional, a lo que contribuyen los, en un principio, confusos diálogos, que no son gratuitos en absoluto. Cuando los personajes (personajes de la Antigüedad, recordemos, no americanos de hoy en día disfrazados con togas) hablan, hablan entre ellos, no lo hacen en beneficio del lector con el objeto de proporcionarle información. Finalmente, me gustaría subrayar de la enorme habilidad de Breem para construir sutiles momentos emotivos, en los que se adivina mucho más de lo que se cuenta; la despedida de Curcio y su amiga Pero, justo al final de la primera parte de la novela o el último encuentro entre Curcio Rufo y la esclava Urraca, son difíciles de olvidar.

Carla Nayland says

Tense political thriller set in Rome in 24 BC. The Emperor Augustus is ill and has no heir, and factions among the senators of Rome are plotting over the succession. When a legate is killed and his daughter kidnapped, failed centurion Curtius Rufus is sent to North Africa to investigate. There he encounters layer upon layer of deceit and intrigue, putting him and his companions in danger of their lives.

Review: <http://www.carlanayland.org/reviews/1...>

Alethea Bothwell says

Very interesting. I didn't understand anything that was going on in the plot - the intrigues and so forth - but the daily-life-in-Rome aspect of it was fascinating. You never think of the ancient Romans as having hangovers or money troubles, so that was cool.

Keith Currie says

I have read some poor reviews of *The Legate's Daughter*, but in my opinion it is a very good novel. I think the problem might be that it is quite a different sort of book to *Eagle in the Snow*, apart of course from the Roman setting. It demands quite a lot of knowledge of the crisis of 24 B.C. and the plots against Augustus. The hero is not privy to everything which is going on behind the scenes and is handicapped by a lack of information throughout. Yet I think it is a clever and moving novel which captures the power struggles in Augustan Rome and North Africa perfectly. Not least of its good points are the portrayals of Cleopatra Selene and Juba, which I found very well done.
