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The Skystone (The Camulod Chronicles, Book 1)



Synopsis

Explores the turbulent world of Roman-occupied Britain, as two Romans struggle to build lives in a land savaged by warring Picts, Celts, and invading Saxons.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recommend this book for the rich and colorful depiction of Britain during the 5th century, as well as for providing an intelligent version of Arthurian beginnings. Full Review: Having read just about every version of the Arthurian legend, I picked up Jack Whyte's book: *The Skystone*, hoping to find something more definitive and less magical. What I discovered, was an extremely well written and historically fascinating look at 5th century life in Roman occupied Britain. Whyte did his homework, and it shows in so many ways. Not only does he evince a formidable knowledge and understanding of Rome's military men, but also of the impact the Empire had on the entire known world. His explanation for the sword Excalibur's beginnings makes sense, and includes magic-if only for the way it appeared to primitive eyes. Whyte, like another author, Colleen McCullough, takes no shortcuts, nor opts for facile answers to the legend of Arthur, and the birth of Camelot. Instead, he patiently builds, step by step, a plausible yet highly entertaining historical setting. General Caius Britannicus is a brilliant and highly decorated Roman man, who was born in Britain. A man of deep insight and wisdom, he foresees the collapse of the Roman Empire. When not on campaign for Rome, he lives with his wife, children and widowed sister Luceia. Publius Varro is General Britannicus' Primus Pilus, or senior aide. Their fortunes are inextricably entwined, and how the two of

them grow deep in love and respect for one another, is the main thrust of the first book. Varro, has a blade fashioned from what his grandfather described as a skystone. This sword has a sheen, and luster ordinary iron doesn't possess, and is much stronger than even bronze.

Upon the completion of Jack Whyte's "The Skystone" I was amazed by the originality of the story. Many authors take the Arthurian story and just tell it again in their own words. This is not the case for Jack Whyte's epic. In fact, Whyte here starts his own Arthurian story as he starts from before King Arthur's time, in a time where the Romans are about to lose their control of Britain. Whyte's story is compelling and complicated and weaves like a lush epic. The novel, which is the first in the epic series the Camulod Chronicles, by the way, is told in the first person through the eyes of Publius Varrus. Varrus is a Roman soldier and "The Skystone" tells his story during an important historical time for Britain. The book opens up with a raid against the British, and Varrus befriends military general Britannicus. With a group of soldiers they are on the run and get into many brawls. Varrus then takes his own path and goes to his hometown to take over his family business of metal working. Varrus is then on the move again and eventually falls in love with a woman. From the beginning to the end "The Skystone" entertains. The greatest aspect of this whole novel is the realism of the events. Similar things did take place back during the ages when Rome was in control of much of Europe and this historical novel, or historical fantasy if you will, holds up to the first part of its name in being historical. The reader will learn much on the Roman army and how it functioned and much about Britain during this fascinating time in history. The major thing that I didn't like about the book were the characters. I found most of the characters to be one dimensional, and while likeable, I couldn't care for any of them.

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