



Avenging Africanus: Belisarius and the Roman Empire's Return to Africa

Matthew Jordan Storm

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Storm's obvious passion for Ancient Rome has made him a must-read author for anyone looking for a great story to pull them in and not let go.

Matthew Jordan Storm presents an outstanding work of historical fiction that follows the characters introduced in the first book of his trilogy. In *Avenging Africanus*, the second volume in Storm's meticulously researched and unequivocally readable series, bonds of loyalty are tested, heroes are made, and the very course of history may be altered.

Rome's new Caesar, the Emperor Justinian, refuses to believe that Rome's best days are behind her. With a secret plan in mind, he sends his army on a quest to bring Rome back to glory. Valentinian and the Roman army, led by General Belisarius, set forth on a dangerous journey to exact revenge on the Vandals, those who ravaged Rome and gained control of Africa more than a century before. Rome has not been successful in previous battles with the Vandals, the army's travels are long and treacherous, and the Vandals are incredibly fierce opponents. Belisarius and his troops are faced with almost insurmountable odds, but if they are successful and prevail, they will realize their Caesar's secret dream of restoring the once-great western empire to its former glory.

The author clearly knows Roman history. The lush details he provides to describe the Roman empire, the journeys and battles of the Roman army, and the sometimes mundane, sometimes exciting aspects of Roman life make it simple to slip into the story, as if bearing witness to some of the most influential and dynamic moments in history. Thankfully, Storm's writing style is not so complex that only those with degrees in ancient Roman history will be able to follow the story line, but most will find intriguing bits of historical interest that may lead to a compulsion to delve deeper into research of the time period. The focus on the realities of battle and on the unique and somewhat strange ruler Justinian I are both interesting and intriguing ways to the move the plot forward.

Storm's work is smooth, dialogue appears to be appropriate and authentic to the time period, and there are passages that have a striking beauty and simplicity: "No soldier cursed. No man spit. No maiden was harried. No valuables stolen. Belisarius' army entered the city in complete silence and not a blade of grass was disturbed." Themes of love, loyalty, and devout patriotism underlie the work, adding to its complex nature and enhancing the plotline.

Avenging Africanus is a wonderful work of historical fiction that will appeal to any lover of the genre, any history buff, or any person looking for a well-researched, fascinating read. Storm's obvious passion for this time period has made him a must-read author for anyone looking for a great story that will pull them into Ancient Rome and not let go.

TRACY FISCHER (November 24, 2015)

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