Clarion Review

General

The Silver Sun
Geoff Hunter
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Three Stars (out of Five)

The second half of the eleventh century was a time of pivotal change in England. A landmark battle at Stamford Bridge led to the withdrawal of Vikings and a showdown at Hastings brought the triumph of William the Conqueror of Normandy over the already exhausted Anglo-Saxon army under Harold Godwinson of Wessex. This historical adventure is set twenty years into William's reign in 1086. *The Silver Sun* gives the monarch a cameo but not a central role as the Normanization of an Anglo-Saxon culture is largely set aside in favor of a narrative which reveals character through conflict.

King William's trusted captain is Alain the Viscount of Montreuil a man who languished long in the dungeon of Sven the Viking but survives to meet the grown son and daughter he never knew. He's sent on a mission to Blancaedrin Abbey and Castle Kilgore in Northumbria hoping to prevent treachery from the greedy nobles who control England's northern army. The Guardian program Alain pioneered yields outstanding results—an impressive cadre of loyal determined combat-ready fighters. They surpass expectations jumping to do what is needed without question internalizing the motto he once scraped into the wall of his cell: "*Courage and Strength*. He knew he had no need to ask. He had seen the skill and commitment of these young men and knew what was in their hearts."

The second protagonist is Alain's daughter Kyra who earns the respect of all she meets and anchors her scenes quite successfully. Kyra is no shrinking violet but rather feisty and impatient to sit back allowing the men to confront the Danes Celts and traitors. The interplay between Guardians stresses a task-oriented bonhomie which traces roots to Dumas' *Three Musketeers*. They'll sacrifice for each other without hesitation but in lighter moments they give each other guff as Red does to Rolfe: "'I think you may have made the biggest mistake in a long history of bad ideas and missed opportunities.'"

Visual descriptions of Castle Kilgore and other localities are nicely formulated accomplishing the challenging task of making the past seem more immediate. A measure of hacking comes with the territory when multiple peoples with swords and low quality armor disagree as to who should own an entire country. The gore isn't emphasized to the maximum nor is it sidestepped altogether either. Blood and mortality feature here as part of an overall concentration on the close-quarters tactical level of movement. There is precious little summarization of events; moderate liberties are taken with facts in service of cohesive storytelling.

Geoff Hunter is the genre-hopping author of the science fiction novel *Visions of Conquest* and a contemporary crime thriller *Breaking a Sunbeam*. An element of medieval times factors into both. *The Silver Sun* is action-filled wish fulfillment for those who imagine themselves a thousand years back in time making their marks with sinew and personal bravery.

Todd Mercer