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William Napier

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The dawn of the 5th century AD, and the Roman Empire totters on the edge of the abyss. Already divided into two, the Imperium is looking dangerously vulnerable to her European rivals. The huge barbarian tribes of the Vandals and Visigoths sense that their time is upon them.

But, unbeknownst to all these great players, a new power is rising in the East. A strange nation of primitive horse-warriors has been striking terror on border peoples for fifty years. But few realise what is about to happen. For these so called 'Huns' now have a new leader. And his name is Attila - 'the Scourge of God.'

Thus begins a saga of warfare, lust and power which brought the whole of the Christian world to its knees - and ended in blood on the fields of France. It is a story of two men: Attila the Hun and Aetius the Roman. One who wanted to destroy the world, and one who fought one final battle to save it...

Attila Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2010 by St. Martin's Griffin (first published May 3rd 2007)

ISBN : 9780312598983

Author : William Napier

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction

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From Reader Review Attila for online ebook

Terri says

The first thing you should know if you are thinking about reading this book, or indeed purchasing it, is that it is not adult Attila. This is William Napier's interpretation of Attila's childhood. This book is about little Attila.

If you want Attila as a full force barbarian adult, uniting tribes and giving Romans the fright of their lives, then this is not the book for you. Book Two and Book Three are the books for you (or so I hear as I have only read this one, to date) and I would recommend you read this first book and accept it for what it is. The story of a child, a small, feisty, quiet, sullen, ferocious child. As he dwells with the Romans as a hostage and then later as a small, but not as small, feisty, quiet, sullen, ferocious teenager.

As for the story itself. As presented by the author William Napier? Well I went from impressed to not so impressed, to giving up.

The writing is how I usually like it. Rich in detail and description and colourful characters. Some to hate, some to like. Where I felt it fell down was with dialogue and the occasional scene that just tried too hard to be something powerful, but turned into something that failed to match the quality of other sections of the book. There was also a tendency for William Napier to play to his strengths, 'description', only he would go too far. Get carried away with himself and churn out some descriptions that were a little desperate or over the top.

The dialogue on occasion was modern. There was too much swearing, which does not help the reader slip from real life to the historical world portrayed in the story. It was not uncommon to find a character saying variations of the F word three or more times in one spurt of dialogue that may be only two short sentences long. I can tolerate the odd modern swear word in a historical fiction, but not so frequently that it feels like I am down the pub on a Friday night.

These scenes and dialogue that let the rest of the book down finally got to me and I ended up skim reading the final 100 pages or so of the book. I am told that in the section that I skim read there was actually some fantasy leaking in. Now, I am fine with fantasy elements such as supernatural if it can be rationally explained by the reader, but apparently this fantasy part was not rational or explainable. It was true fantasy. I wish authors would not do that to straight historical fiction. It loses a lot of readers and can ruin a story. Especially if it is in the last quarter of a book.

For all of these reasons - but mostly because I lost interest enough for me to not want me to go on - I nearly gave it 2 stars. Only I had to consider the fact that I was also in a rush to finish it. I was on a tight schedule. Perhaps if I had not been, I would not have skim read the final 100 pages and I would have continued to 'just' like it.

3 stars (out of 5) to me means that I like a book. I don't have to really like it, that could mean 'just' like it, and as far as Attila by William Napier is concerned, I did 'just' like it and maybe that is enough to want to continue to Book Two. I hope so. Only time will tell.

Mark says

A really good read, a touch of fantasy. Great characters.

Stephanie says

Highly enjoyable. This is more historical fiction than historically accurate. It does however do a great job of giving you a sense of Attila. This is the first book in a biographical series about Attila. This one is focused on his childhood as a Roman hostage and then his return to his people. I will certainly be looking for the next two books.

Beorn says

A smooth practically velvetine telling of the tale of one of the Roman Empire's most colourful enemies, Attila the Hun.

Napier - pen name of Christopher Hart - lays down his tale with a slick yet deeply rich detailed manner which, for the first two-thirds of the book, leaves you coming back for more time and time again almost insatiably.

The one thing that lets the book down for me personally is that there's the rather unnecessary distraction of focusing on the backstory of fictitious and generally inconsequential (at least in the grand scheme of things) lieutenant Lucius.

Looking through some of the previous reviews of this book I feel I have to say that if you're looking down your nose at this book because of it's profanities - if you think profanities are a modern invention, you're either incredibly prudish or plain naive - or the readers own misconception that this, the opening salvo in a trilogy, was going to focus straight into adult Attila's actions.

As the saying goes, to know the man first you must know the boy.

This is a very good solid example of historical fiction though tapers off somewhat in the last third of the book. I was strongly enthusing about this book and loving every last page until the aforementioned tapering leaving you with the feeling that it was ending with a whimper rather than a bang.

Marty says

This was a very interesting take on the Attila the Hun story. It starts out with Attila as a pre-pubescent boy, being held hostage in Rome to insure the loyalty of his grandfather Uldin, King of the Huns and ends with his exile at the age of fifteen. This is the first book in the trilogy by Napier and its historical details appear to be pretty accurate, although you have to suspend your disbelief that 5th century Romans would be using expressions like 'okay' and 'yeah.' General Stilicho and his wife Serena are depicted as sympathetic to the plight of the wily young Attila. By contrast, Emperor Honorius is chicken-feeding idiot, and his sister, Galla

Placidia, is a self-righteous, power-hungry bitch who is determined to destroy both the boy and the general's family. Napier gives both Romans and Barbarians fair depictions - both were brutal and honorable after their own fashion. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the series.

Gyan Kumar says

I have always loved Historical fiction, it's one of my favorite genres. And especially the Roman history has a special place in my curiosity ever since I visited Rome.

So this book was always intriguing to me. But what I loved most about it is the human side of the characters. How Attila was much more than a world-conquering barbarian. I also quite liked the stark difference that the author showed between the suave roman culture of the time and the stark naked barbaric Hunnish culture of the same era.

The intrigue of the sybilline verses and the sheer graphic details from the palaces of Rome to the steppes of Scythia, I quite enjoyed the book.

Rating: 4/5

Olethros says

-La juventud del Azote de Dios.-

Género. Novela histórica.

Lo que nos cuenta. A finales del siglo V, cuando el Imperio Romano de Occidente ya ha caído, el anciano historiador Prisco de Panio vive en un monasterio napolitano mientras recuerda la gloria perdida de Roma y uno de sus últimos capítulos épicos, el que unió los destinos de Flavio Aecio y de Attila rodeados de guerra, conspiraciones, ambición, honor, muerte y poder. A comienzos del mismo siglo, Estilicón acaba con la amenaza del bárbaro Radagaiso y es testigo de lo letales que resultan sus nuevas tropas aliadas auxiliares, los Hunos, al mando de su rey Uldino cuyo nieto Attila es huésped en el palacio del emperador Honorio y es testigo del destino de Estilicón. Primer libro de la trilogía Attila.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Bobby says

Finished it last night. Got a bit confused when the Lieutenant became part of the story but author wrapped it up well. Look forward to the next book!! Solid 4 stars!!

Michelle Hoogterp says

This is a well-written, engaging book. The scenes are vivid and the characters real. Nothing felt out of place or awkward and I'm intrigued with the narrator as well as the main characters. I highly recommend this title to those lovers of historical fiction and those who just like enjoyable and well-written works. This was truly well-crafted.

Redfox5 says

I've been reading alot of Roman historical fiction lately and it feels so strange to be now reading a book which contains Rome's downfall. Everything that was fought for, is now going to be lost. Trouble is, I can't be to sad about it as I've already got behind Attila and am now cheering him on. I want him to win! I also really liked the British solider, Lucius. He was a good, strong character. The plot was interesting and kept me page turning, like with all these books, I sometimes get a little bored by the fighting but there wasn't to much of that. I don't know how much of this book is accurate, as I know nothing about the Huns. But it's entertaining enough for me. Bring on the next one :)

Lisa says

A decent beginning to a trilogy dealing with Attila the Hun, this first book deals with the making of the man as Attila spends his boyhood as a hostage in Rome, the treachery of whose inhabitants gives flame to his enmity and hasten his attempts to return to his people.

As a fictionalisation of Attila this does breathe life into the character, giving us a feel for him as a person rather than as a legendary historical figure, but fell down at times due to the use of language. I understand the reasoning behind having the characters speak in modern language, all the better for us to understand and identify with them, but it was at times a little jarring (I strongly doubt that Attila ever used the teenaged refrain 'whatever...' when dealing with anyone).

It was also a little disappointing not getting further on into Attila's story by the time the book ended, but as it's the first in a trilogy I suppose that was to be expected!

Amanda J says

I really enjoyed this book on Attila the Hun's early life. I don't know enough about historic Attila to comment on the accuracy of the book, but it has good entertainment value. There were times when the story drifted away from the action and towards mysticism and philosophy and I found myself bored. But the rest of the novel made up for those moments. I look forward to reading the rest of the series.

Andy says

Rome C AD408 is laid out to us as an Empire on the edge of collapse, it's allies the Huns alongside Roman forces under the command of General Stilicho defeat the barbarian hordes & Rome is saved (for now).

The players are thus introduced, one being a hostage, that of Attila as a boy in Rome alongside other barbarian leaders sons, his grandfather King Uldin (of the Huns) having just fought alongside the Romans. General Stilicho & his wife Serena are a couple who feature in Attila's life, somewhat surrogate parents to him in an otherwise hostile environment. The Emperor & Princess Galla are front & centre in Attila's world too along with various others namely a servant & a soldier, all who have some way influenced a young Attila as we read of his early life at the hands of Rome. Other hostages, namely the Vandal Princes Gesaric & Beric become his protagonists, they appearing in a few scenes.

So what else happens.....?

The sack of Rome by Alaric of the Goths is covered in the period but only through the eyes of a travelling Roman soldier (lieutenant which is a rank I don't recognise as being Roman tbh) & not really done in any detail... its just mentioned which is an omission I think.

The character of Attila is well played & I warmed to him instantly, strong, wilful & mindful of his roots whilst in the belly of Rome, certainly not seduced by its trappings as other hostages appear to be. Always distrustful, listening & gathering intelligence all the while, making plans to escape, its all believable as part of the story. Its the only part of the story, at its ending, that I truly enjoyed.

Some parts contain mystical nonsense which don't really fit in with the story but perhaps fit with the superstitious nature of the period, some are a little fantastical though. A Druid, shaman & witch all make appearances & have to say I mostly cringed when I read those excerpts, expecting unicorns or cave trolls to pop outta the mist at any moment.....

The part about the Huns was quite interesting & probably the only part where you felt immersed in the period & the people. The Romans could have been from any era especially the soldiering element.

As you can derive from the last statement I did expect a little more historical detail. As for its substance, in truth I found it a similar read to the Simon Scarrow Macro & Cato series (even the Centurion in it is called Marco!), not great depth or intrigue but good fun nevertheless..... not a read that takes itself too seriously. The author even nicks a couple immortal lines from the film Zulu during a battle scene!

Quite a contrast throughout the book, sometimes the historical detail is there & the context is sound at others its a boys own adventure whilst in patches it's puerile crassness. Bit of a mash-up I'm trying to say but for the most part it did hold my attention & i would give it 3.25 stars for an enjoyable enough romp, although not the historical content I had expected or was looking for, rounded down to a 3.

Bryn Hammond says

Ambitious enough that I'm going on with the trilogy.

Yes, Attila is a fighting fourteen at the end of this. Or sixteen, I forget. In the beginning he was twelve and the Romans and the tall barbarians of Europe took him for seven or eight, because of his Hun stature. The Huns are very much Mongol-type here, their physical selves disturbing to the Romans; they hark back to the Altai Mountains and Lake Baikal, and he clearly goes with the theory that these were the 'Huns' the Chinese knew. He's a novelist not a scholar, and he likes a wide canvas, and that suits his story.

Most of Rome's defenders are ex-barbarians, of one tribe or another; again and again people say, 'Who's a real Roman nowadays? The barbarians *are* Rome.' Attila is a precious hostage, a guarantee of peace, along with princes or chief's sons from other peoples. Most of these foreign hostages Rome corrupts; for this is a corrupt and rotten Rome, and he lays on the decadence, which disgusts our young Attila, who pines for the simple life and freedom of the steppe.

The novel doesn't follow only a teenage lad; we visit the lives of soldiers and defenders and see the crumbling of the edifice. There is Alaric to invade, while Attila's still in short pants; the scope of the trilogy seems to be 'the fall of Rome', not just the life of Attila. I don't call this first book background, or even context, I call it the big canvas.

On the Huns themselves, though. As of yet they are Rome's allies, and Stilicho, one of the last heroes of old Rome, urges that they need never be enemies. Roman civilization has nothing to offer them, 'they do not envy us'. Napier needs a trilogy, not only to survey the state of Rome but to have the Huns at this start-point, and end where they end. It might be a cautionary tale, in that the Romans mistreat them; we see enough inner disloyalty, Romans' treachery to Romans or Rome's cause, through this first book, and after Attila's adventures here the Huns have a grievance.

As for Attila, if he comes across over-clever, he was very clever, he seems to have been a brain. What with the massive contempt he faces in Rome, for his person and his Mongoloid looks and for his people, a very physical type of prejudice, he seethes with hatred, but he always meets a kindness with a kindness. Loyalty is holy to him. They debate what sort of sense of honour barbarians have – frontier soldiers who know their barbarians – the Goths, for instance, have their unique code of behaviour in war. The Huns too have a different but a strong ethic.

When at last we go among the Huns, I was a trifle let down. Hunnish society has largely to be guesswork, and I didn't care for a couple of his guesses. In the future novels, I hope he doesn't give me too much of the subservient women and the men who may express no emotion but rage. A Hun ambassador wonders at the clout allowed to Galla Placida, a woman? If I were to piece together a Hun society from steppe cultures, and contrast to Rome, I'd have done that the other way round. I hope he lets me stay on the Huns' side, where I am.

There were faults of execution, I felt. But the concept and the story – the width of story – interest me and I enjoyed most. I'd drop a hint that his study of Yeats comes out, but that'd put people off, and give you a false impression, because the writing isn't what they call poetic or nothing. There is a verve to it; there's amusement now and then; and he knows how to tell a concentrated short tragedy of a fight. Early on I was grimacing at clichés, but either that cleared up or I forgot to notice, caught up in the story.

♦ Jennifer ♦ says

won this on first reads

Attila by William Napier

This book starts around the time that the Roman Empire is at it's peak. Following the story of the young hostage Attila the Hun. Hostages are kept in order to ensure that each side in a treaty is faithful to the terms agreed upon. Attila hates Rome. He wants nothing more than to escape these Christians and their education that they want to force on him. They believe him and his people to be barbarians, and they try their best to convert Attila to their enlightened ways. However, Attila is having none of it. Despite being shown how lavish and rich Rome can be, he still longs for his home of open fields and endless skys. Throughout the book you follow him as he escapes and starts the long journey to his people.

Without a doubt the best part of this book was the character Attila himself. He seemed to just be the symbol of strength. Even at the beginning of the book when he is still just a very young boy. Always he stood up to people that were probably more than half his size, and yet he still came out looking stronger than any that opposed him. He was arrogant and prideful, but that still gave him character and made me like him all the more for it.

I've never really read a book where Rome was depicted as it was in this one. Usually its shown to be a sort of glorious place where only gods lived . But in this book it was shown to be a place of filth and over-indulgence. I really liked that it wasn't something that I've read a million times before . And I really was able to get the sense of why Attila hated Rome so much.

Great book overall. I loved the characters, and I felt transported to that time.
