



Horses on the Storm

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At the edge of the Judaean Desert, bandits are menacing the stability of the kingdom of Herod the Great. Alarmed at the unsteadiness of its aging ally and the threat to the security of its gateway to the East, Rome dispatches Tribune Ulpius Crus and a single cohort of the Twenty-fifth Legion to the Judaean wasteland. The tribune asks Centurion Quintus Flavius Rufio to lead the cohort with him to Judaea to establish a temporary Roman presence as a deterrent near the edge of the Salt Sea. Veteran of eastern campaigns, Rufio recognizes that the threat of bandits is an illusion and that Rome faces a far superior danger. He must quickly train his foot soldiers to take to the saddle, for now they challenge a brilliant commander leading a force of the finest horsemen on earth. On the outcome of this confrontation depend the existence of Judaea and the credibility and primacy of Rome.

Horses on the Storm Details

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From Reader Review Horses on the Storm for online ebook

Jane says

My rating is closer to 3.5 but I rounded it up to 4****; this novel deserved more than a 3*** rating. It was not as good as Legion by the same author. These are the further adventures of Centurion Rufio; Laticlavian Tribune Crus; and the 2nd Cohort of the XXV Legion Rapax. On this outing, they and Flavia, a proficient archer in her own right and Rufio's Gallic sweetheart, are sent to Judaea to maintain a Roman presence in the area near the Salt Sea, ostensibly to deter bandits but more importantly, to prevent Parthian incursion into Judaea. On the way there, they fight pirates at sea. Rufio's experience from his army service in Syria stands this detachment in good stead. Much of the novel is taken up with buying and training horses and training the foot soldiers as cavalrymen. The legionaries build a *gyrus*, a circular training ring.

[<http://www.luntromanfort.org/index.ph....>]

There is also a Judaean army contingent involved, led by a young man, Matthias, who in the course of the novel learns leadership pointers from Rufio. There must be other Roman novels that emphasize cavalry training, but this is the first one I've read. Most Roman novels give a fighting role to the cavalry, but as yet I haven't run across anything about training. The soldiers also must deal with accustoming the horses to the presence of camels, which carry water and weapons for the Parthians. The climactic set-piece battle between Romans and Judaeans against Parthians was quite exciting. Tactics were based on Rufio's reading of Sargon II of Assyria's battle with Rusa of Urartu, centuries before Alexander the Great. But as Rufio says at one point there is always the freedom to improvise if circumstances warrant it.

I enjoyed these parts. The characters were unforgettable; Romans were idealized, but who cares? I liked the episode (view spoiler). Some bits of fantasy enter the story after centaurs are discussed, especially Chiron. Does this mythic figure help them? I liked the idea of Flavia keeping an ephemeris [diary] upon Crus' suggestion, as Rufio is teaching her to read and write. I could feel the author's love of horses; I wouldn't be surprised if he has written in some of his own successful ideas, using Rufio and Decurion Bellator to express them. Some parts of the novel struck me as too saccharine or sentimental, hence my lowered rating.
