When Centurion Macro and his young subordinate, Optio Cato arrive on the shores of Britain to take part in the Emperor Claudius invasion in AD 43, Macro knows the desperately outnumbered Roman army will be facing one of the toughest campaigns ever. Meanwhile, a sinister organization is secretly betraying the brave men of the legions. When assassination rumors coincide with the Emperor's arrival, the soldiers realize they are up against a force more ruthless than the Britons, and that time is running out if they are to prevent Claudius' glorious victory from turning to disaster.

This is a sequel to Scarrows first book, Under the Eagle, and is every bit as good as its antecedent. Both provide us with a series of interesting, new twists. Few novels have been written of Ancient Rome that do not feature christians, the triumph of christianity, or the excesses of Latin civilization. This is one of the few that has none of that. It follows the career of a slave who was once in the Emperor's service and who so pleased that worthy that he was freed and sent into the Roman army in a position of responsibility (highly unusual for a recruit). The legion to which he was assigned is destined to invade and conquer Britain and I, being of British extraction, surprisingly find myself cheering for the efforts of the legions. There is one important inaccuracy (I believe) that should perhaps be challenged. Claudius was the emperor during the conquest of Britain and that is accurate enough. However, he is portrayed as a bumbling dolt which, according to my old Ancient History professor at UCLA, he was not. Suetonius wrote of him as such, as did many of his contemporaries, but that was evidently because of physical disabilities and a speech impediment that made him appear retarded. Apparently those physical flaws masked a real ability for organization. Civil war abounded in republican Rome and had it remained a republic, many historians feel it would have collapsed shortly after Caligula's death. Claudius was the one who pulled that republic out of the hands of self-seeking senators made
them responsible for their acts, and established a firm government administration as well as a standard of succession to supreme power. It was Claudius, not Augustus, who made Rome into the Empire that survived for another 300 years. But I digress.

Scarrow has given us a slightly watered-down, but exciting, view of life within the legions, and has filled his adventure with historical facts and some speculations that are nothing short of fascinating.

I cannot recommend this book too highly.

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