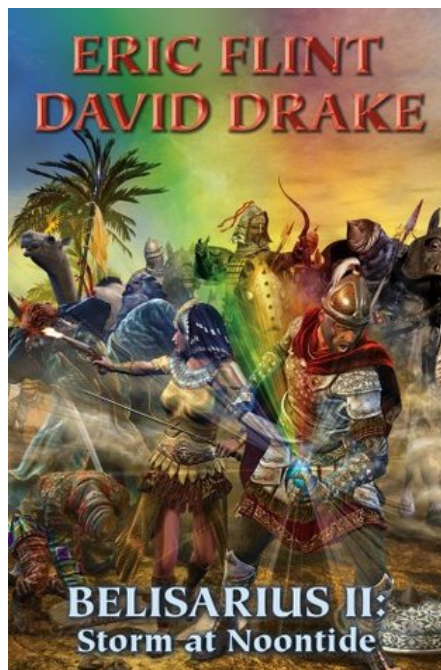




Belisarius II: Storm at Noontide

Eric Flint , David Drake

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1. The Belisarius series has been very popular, with over a quarter of a million copies in print.
2. Eric Flint is co-author of three *New York Times* best sellers: *1634: The Galileo Affair*, *1634: The Baltic War* and *1634: The Bavarian Crisis*.
3. David Drake has written many bestsellers, including the Hammer's Slammers series for Baen, and the Lord of the Isles series for Tor.
4. Eric Flint is a brilliant star of fantasy and science fiction. His alternate history novel, *1632*, is a strong seller in mass market, with an 87% sell through to date, and strong critical praise, as from *Publishers Weekly*, which called it "gripping and expertly detailed."
5. Advertising in *Locus*, more
6. Simultaneous hardcover and trade paperback editions.
7. Co-op available

Continuing the popular Belisarius saga, with two full-length novels in one volume.

Destiny's Shield: Evil from beyond time: The Malwa Empire squats like a toad across sixth century India, commanded by ruthless men with depraved appetites. But the thing from the distant future that commands them is far worse. Those who oppose the purulent Hell the Malwa will make of Earth have sent a crystal, Aide, to halt their advance. Aide holds all human knowledge—but cannot act by himself. That requires Count Belisarius, the greatest general fo the age and perhaps of all ages, who must outwit the evil empire—and then, when there is no longer room to maneuver, to meet it sword-edge to sword-edge, lest evil beyond human conception rules the world forever.

Fortune's Stroke: Link, the supercomputer from a future that should not, must not exist has used terror and gunpowder weapons to forge the Malwa Empire on the Indian subcontinent. Aide and Belisarius have led the armies of Byzantium and blunted the first assault of the Malwa hordes. Now he and his allies from all the world face overwhelming numbers in a ring that tightens about them. The armies of Good and Evil gathered on the fertile plains of Mesopotamia will decide the fate of the world—and the fate of all the future.

Belisarius II: Storm at Noontide Details

Date : Published March 3rd 2009 by Baen (first published March 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9781416591481

Author : Eric Flint , David Drake

Format : Hardcover 880 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, War, Military Fiction, Alternate History, Fantasy, Historical, Fiction

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From Reader Review Belisarius II: Storm at Noontide for online ebook

Glen Robinson says

This continues the story of Byzantine Rome's most famous general Belisarius who in this case is given the task of saving the world by, wait for it, a supercomputer from the future. Apparently in the far future, there is a war on between a cyborg race and a computer race that are our descendants. The evil cyborgs send Link, their representative, back to help change history and create a super-nation in India that will eventually take over and dominate the world. In response, the good supercomputers send Aide back to speak to Belisarius through a crystal the size of a grapefruit and help him understand the danger of this new rising nation. Both sides begin to assist their nations with technological advances such as gunpowder, stirrups for horses, rudimentary cannons and even the beginnings of muskets. Aide also assists Belisarius by letting him see future battles such as Napoleon's Penninsular Campaign and Stalingrad of World War II to learn new tactics.

The idea sounds pretty far fetched, but the two authors make it work well. Storylines and characters are well thought out and fleshed out. Drake comes up with the concepts and Flint, as I understand it, wrote the details of the book. This is the second book in a trilogy. At 859 pages, it sounds like it would be a handful, but it's actually two smaller paperback books---Destiny's Shield and Fortune's Stroke--that have been combined in a hardback. I stumbled across the first book in this series a few years ago when I was killing time in a library, fell in love with it, and bought it later.

If you are partial to military science fiction, alternate history, or both, I recommend this series.

Bjoern says

The book is from the outset much more fluently readable than the first volume with its bizarre introduction phase. We find ourselves deeply involved in the Roman campaign to support Persia against the indian invasion, which takes the form of two fronts, one slowly rolling up the eastern provinces and comprising mostly Rajput cavalry, so they're vastly superiorly led by now general Rana Sanga (who is supported by the Roman spymaster and defector Narses), the other led by Link the cyborg intelligence that was sent back from the future by the eugenistical branch of humanity (that is against the multitude of genetically modified or mutated humans inhabiting other star systems or even galaxies, the height of which are the bodyless energy cloud beings "Aide" calls Great Ones, that are connected to this crystalline follow up species to humans on Mother Earth itself after it became contaminated by a DNA destroying virus, and attacking by landing forces in the mouth of the two major streams of Mesopotamia and then sending out 200,000 soldiers right into the heart of Persian rule.

Aide of course is the nemesis of Link, a crystalline consciousness sent back to support roman military genius Belisarius in his fight against the indian based conquerers that try to shape the world in the way the eugenical fraction wants it.

So we experience lots of battles and sneaky strategies thought out by Belisarius, one of which is sending his wife Antonina and Empress-regent Theodora's chief spymistress Irene southward to Ethiopia, where Rome's other ally, the seafaring kingdom of Axum is at home. (Irene and some ethiopians continue on to India for some secret missions and to gain intelligence directly in the homeland of the enemy, while Antonina controls the support routes which will deliver the newest roman weaponry that came from the future intervention to all necessary parties on the three roman fronts...

After the indian surge northwards has been stopped at the channel connecting Euphrates and Tigris (long since left to dry out as the Romans used it to attack directly at the capital of Ctesiphon 100 or 200 years ago) the Malwa and their troops have retreated to their beachhead at Charxas and wait for the next westward monsoon to bring new supplies, more gunpowder weapons and fresh troops.

Therefore while the Persian Army blocks them in the Riverdeltas, Belisarius troops go eastwards and confront the Rajputan army slowly conquering Bactria and the other border provinces. In a long row of retreat skirmishes and a single larger battle on a mountain pass on top of the Zagros Range Belisarius buys time for his next masterplan to succeed.

Meanwhile in Ethiopia malwan sneakery demands a high price... the royal palace is blown up with gunpowder bombs and an arab revolt led by rebellious ethiopian regiments threatens the hold onto the south of Arabia that just a few months before had been secured through a costly campaign. Prince Eon who had accompanied Belisarius to India in his reconnaissance mission has to beat down the rebels, secure a long lasting peace with the other bedouin tribes and then can turn into planning revenge on the murderous indian thugs... they stomp out the rebellion, a treaty with the Hijaz based tribes is found in form of a marriage between Eon and one of their princesses (as usual in Flint's novels a bright and well educated girl, good looking too) then Antonina goes on a sea expedition against the bridgehead at Charxas with an ethiopian fleet and the new roman cannons.

Belisarius finally has a chance to start his plan, a tunnel they painstakingly disguised as silver mine in the mountains, helps his troops to untangle themselves from the rajputan pursuit, a big herd of riderless but weighed down horses is further helping in the distraction of the enemy trackers and without an army in their neck his troops with fresh horses the Persians delivered, quickly advance towards the bridgehead at Charxas Harbor. Simultaneously the persian king retreats with his troops, coaxing a large indian expedition to try and destroy his army out of the safe garrison, leaving Belisarius with much better 2 to 3 chances, further enlarged by using his Kushan defectors as Trojan Horse and gaining unhindered entry into the town. The harbor is theirs, including a handful of large Malwa transport ships they plan to take back into allied country to regroup, rearm and reinforce their forces.

Antonina's flotilla wipes out the Malwa blockading fleet in front of the harbor that would have prevented the transports from safely escaping, then they go after the last ships trying to sneak Link back out to India while the cut off army will have to force their way back through all of Persia and may not even have any form of supplies left or any hope of foraging in the large deserts of the interior, if of over a hundred thousand a tenth may escape back home it will be much. Link tries to pull Belisarius with her into death, but the trap is prematurely sprung and does not succeed, Antonina then shoots the human vessel for the inhuman computer sent back to conquer the world, bereaving it of the satisfaction to have poisoned itself before Belisarius could claim the kill... the cyborg consciousness is reawoken in the already chosen next vessel, the granddaughter of the last one, a teenage girl from the imperial indian family... but it has lost about eighteen months of data due to missing backup possibilities while on campaign.

In India itself the Majarashtra insurrection is also successful and Shakuntalas Search for allies to bind into another marriage agreement helping them with their cause is ended, when her advisors and the roman master spy Irene end up suggesting she marries Rao to bind the legal government of her Empire and the mountain rebels led by Rangunath Rao as one and giving the revolt against Malwa a joined leadership couple that stands for successful opposition instead of all the other kingdom's cowering and ransom paying to evade Malwa notice and their long military stretch.

Her trek to the fortress of Deogiri where Rao bound a large siegeforce into holding him off from leading his troops in a free campaign all over the Deccan shows how much the Marathas support this move and increases the ranks of their forces vastly. So the Malwa army must retreat or fear another crippling loss. The Kushans meanwhile decided to start their own kingdom in Peshawar and to conquer their homeland back from the Malwa, effectively blocking the way back to Persia that way and opening yet another front. Kungas will be king and Irene his queen.

Things look dire for the Link led scourge of India and Belisarius is now free to attack them on their homeground with whole fleets of his new cannon armed ships and musket armed armies of Romans, Ethiopians and Persians as soon as the Monsoon blows eastward again.

I really enjoyed this. It is a pretty well researched book as far as "getting the details right" is concerned, while of course the bigger things like the personalities of the names dropped from history books into the novels suffer and are largely bent to the author's will. The only really annoying aspect of the writing is that Aide is overused by far and now goes from just delivering sound tactical advice and inspiration for weapons the roman smiths and artificers may be able to handle and (as far as that term applies to the verge between Iron age and modern times) mass produce into constant banter with its human bearer and into long winded history lessons, flooding the "roman era" narration with anachronistical mentions of terms and locations like Stalingrad, Waterloo and even Dien-Bien-Phu. The fascination for that is wearing thin VERY quickly and it turns into an irritant even quicker after that.

On a much lesser degree the wide spread use of catchphrases has also gotten a bit annoying, especially as more and more people get one of their own that then is applied whenever possible. Flint likes to repeat such things and even goes into re-using descriptions for Antonina landing on her backside after firing the pistol/shotgun hybrid she's handed as PDW / Last resort when going into combat and he does it so much that it almost borders on a self-parody.

Other than that... the figures are really alive and colorful now (while everybody not essential to the story still stays a greyscale cardboard cutout not much worth in terms of personality or descriptive narration...) the most amazing example is the vile little fatty emperor of Malwa India: Skandagupta, that turned over the few paragraphs of his most personal scene yet inside my head into the personification of the drawn Sultan of Agrabah from Disney's Alladdin movie. Which does not really fit THAT well when his manners are more like the freaks from the second Indiana Jones Movie :D But he's just described so well and has so much fun when fantasizing about torture and sounds so foolish when talking about his empire that the picture was indelible after a few lines. A happy little flummy of total evil. That alone is worth the four stars in my eyes. :D

Coyora Dokusho says

Read at least (3) times

Really good! but... yeah I have a midterm tomorrow. I can't blame how good it is though! Because I doubt I would have studied anyway >.< I wish... I could get rid of my perfectionism - which this story is actually really helpful with! Because it's all about how perfection is impossible, and it's the imperfections that make us human and vital.
