



Imperatrix

Russell Whitfield

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The third adventure in the visceral female gladiator trilogy that began with *Gladiatrix*—Lysandra is back, and she's going to war!In the dirt of the Flavian Amphitheatre, known to history as the Coliseum, lies the bloodied body of Spartan priestess Lysandra—cut down by Rome's adored Gladiatrix Prima, the beautiful and deadly Illeana, the Midnight Falcon. At the edge of the underworld, the goddess Athene offers Lysandra's spirit a stark choice: reside eternally amid the fields of Elysium, or return to a life that is full of pain and sorrow—but will secure Lysandra a glorious place in legend for generations to come. Meanwhile, the legions prepare to embark for the Dacian frontier as the Emperor Domitian seeks revenge for Rome's worst defeat for almost a century. With them is the former tribune Gaius Minervius Valerian, anxious to wipe away the disgrace of being the sole survivor of his own command, annihilated by a swarm of savage warrior horsewomen. And now it seems that Lysandra's destiny also lies to the east, as well as the prospect of a final and bloody reckoning with an old and hated adversary.

Imperatrix Details

Date : Published March 1st 2015 by Myrmidon Books

ISBN : 9781910183038

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Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction

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anolinde says

[Lysandra finally came home and her father just took her baby from her?? And Lysandra was like, "Eh, whatever, I guess I owe him"? Both ridiculous and unnecessary, but I imagine childcare duties would get in the way of having hot sex with Illeana. Priorities, I guess. (hide spoiler)]

Leila Anani says

Imperatrix makes a fitting end to the Lysandra trilogy. Lysandra recovers (with divine help) from her near fatal battle with Aesalon Nocturna and gets drafted to fight the Dacians by canny Roman strategist Julius Frontinus. The Dacians destroyed 5 legions and part of this because they had women fighters which made the Roman legions hesitate - so Frontinus hires Lysandra and her female gladiators to be an auxiliary force in a punitive campaign against the troublesome plainspeople.

Love the plot - it makes sense and a refreshing change to take gladiators out of the arena and into war. Huge thumbs up there. But did it have to be the Dacian campaigns? sigh... Personally one of my least favourite Roman campaigns. It's pretty much guerilla warfare and wholesale slaughter with very little honour on either side - still Kudos to the author that he's managed to take one of my least favourite topics and come up with a novel that's not only readable but actually enjoyable.

Characters are well realised - Valerian the legion commander comes across as particularly sympathetic as do the supporting cast. I even gasp had some respect for the villainous Sorina and her new lover Amage - thought the way she treated Teuta was a bit bitchy though. Oddly the character I had the least liking for, at least for the first 3/4 was the heroine Lysandra. Now I loved her in the first two books, but here I found her arrogance rather off putting - still once she was in Sorina's clutches I rallied to her cause. She reminded me a lot of a female Alexander the Great here - which I guess was the intention? to show her as a war leader rather than a gladiator?

My only other niggle is a slightly simple plot with few surprises. The whole narrative is a pissing contest between various troops of both sides until one climactic siege battle - a couple of other skirmishes earlier on might have been nice. Otherwise can't really fault this. It was very exciting and the final battle lived up to my expectations.

My favourite thing about this series as a whole is the female perspective - It's so refreshing to have Ancient World fiction with strong female characters AND a decent amount of blood and guts. Highly recommended.

Maria Jane says

The culmination of the Epic Ode to Lysandra. Fans will not be disappointed with Lysandra's third adventure. Their only disappointment is that the book ends. Filled with Mercenaries, vengeful lovers, war and carnage, this sweeping tale will transport you back to the battles of the ancient world.

Jay Cothrum says

Perfect ending to the trilogy! Will miss Lysandra. Hope she and Illeana pop up somewhere else soon!

Robert W. Meyerholtz says

Not the best of the trilogy

I'm glad Russell Whitfield explained in detail the difference between Imperatrix as opposed to the first books Gladiatrix and Roma Victrix. I was disappointed feeling more of a dramatic showdown between Lysandra and Sorina should have occurred. This was a long drawn out book of women sharing the battlefield with men with more than enough gore and Latin words. I loved the first two which featured women in gladiators arenas. There was interesting, intimate stories of women trained to fight and kill with and without remorse. This book was long and very detailed in what was like in these times. I did like the question of the sense and validity of war which is tied in to current world events. This did tie up a very few loose ends and I doubt there will be anymore in this series.

Krishna says

I am utterly, thoroughly and miserably envious of anyone who's not read Whitfield's marvelous and deliriously entertaining Lysandra Trilogy. They have an amazing trio of books to plough through. Imperatrix brings Lysandra and arch-nemesis Sorina together for one last epic showdown amidst the Dacian Wars. Riveting stuff. A Must Read for any fan of historical fiction.

Kate Quinn says

One of the things I like so much about Russell Whitfield's rip-banging trilogy on female gladiators is that many of his women - including the heroine, the ferocious, lovely, and endearingly humorless Lysandra - take pleasure in their profession. Most books about gladiators (including my own) focus on slaves who come to the arena unwillingly, but Russell's ladies find pride, honor, and fulfillment in their dangerous career. Life is dangerous anyway; at least the arena offers them a chance at fame, fortune, freedom, and the gender-bending opportunity for pure badassery. It's a bold choice, and it works well for the first two books detailing Lysandra's rise to the top in Flavian Rome. Yet at the same time, it leaves the ironic taste in your mouth that the heroine's struggles are all happening in the name of . . . entertainment.

"Imperatrix" brings that full circle by sending Lysandra and her gladiators out of the arena and into the real world, into a battle where there are no rules of combat, no breaks for the wounded, and certainly no missio given for well-fought losers. The war against the Dacians is going badly, and a Roman commander recruits Lysandra and her force of female gladiators to soak up some of the casualties for the beleaguered legions. War in all its realities will strip Lysandra of many old friends, of her hubristic assumption that she is always right, and finally of her illusions about the honor of combat. It will also allow her to be a true champion, not

just a paper champion made of applause and rose petals, but a warrior who knows death is coming in the morning and still doesn't flee - she meets it on her feet, not because an audience is applauding, but because her mission and her fellow warriors in the shield wall need her to the end.

I would not dream of saying if that means Lysandra actually dies. The final battle is grueling, hair-raising, splendidly written, and the end has a twist I did not see coming. A marvelous conclusion to a trilogy I have thoroughly enjoyed.

*Note: I am online friends with the author, but I only "met" him after reading his work. Ben Kane heard me raving about his first two books online, and virtually introduced us; I was a fan before I was a friend, and this review is completely honest.

Aaron Advani says

EPIC!!!!

A brilliant end to a brilliant trilogy.

From start to finish this series has been well crafted in it's characterisation and story telling.

This ranks alongside Robert Shea's Shike 2 book series as being my favourite historical fiction.

I can't praise this highly enough.

If you love Historical fiction then just buy this and enjoy it!!
