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In the early days of the Roman Empire, as the Romans are expanding their rule and the noble Etruscan civilization in Italy is waning, a young Etruscan noblewoman is violated by a renegade supernatural being. Accidentally impregnated, she bears a child who is partly supernatural and grows to manhood in only six years. Separated from his mother, he travels to Rome and is adopted by a businessman as his son. His name is changed to Horatius. But all the while, his demon father is seeking him in order to kill him, for Horatius is a conduit through which the demon might be found and magically destroyed. Etruscans is epic, magical fantasy on a par with David Drake's Lord of the Isles series.

Etruscans Details

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Author : Morgan Llywelyn , Michael Scott

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Andy says

This was a hard review considering the I generally like Morgan Llywelyn's books. However, this did not live up to the standard she has consistently delivered in other titles. The best description of this book is shallow. There is not much information on the culture of the Etruscans (besides the focus on the Dying) and little actual description for the Teutmetians or the Romans. The Ais are little more than a plot device, with only one of the Ais getting more than a brief cameo (and even this role is lacking). The story is neither original nor is it much more than a partly fleshed out outline. The story rushes through plot points like it's hitting a checklist rather than showing readers a glimpse of the world. Outside of the disappointing story I was also a little annoyed with the viewpoint of the story. While the whole of the story seems to be told in the 2nd person, sometimes the character's viewpoint would switch from paragraph to paragraph, or even mid-paragraph. This made it difficult to tell when a description was based on a external character's perception or the internal thoughts of the character. On the plus side, this is a quick read with short chapters and it is easy to follow the story.

Dan says

A little superficial but still a fun read.

Mary says

Twice I tried to read this book and just couldn't get through it. I loved her Irish books and wanted to like this one, but the story just never grabbed me.

Anita says

A very iffy 3 unfortunately. I had high hopes for this book too

Ron says

Fantasy, not historical fiction. Not bad and not badly done.

Tara says

What a disappointment. I couldn't wait for it to end.

Jeanie says

I really enjoyed this. I found myself caught up quickly in the character's lives & had a hard time putting it down. Very good.

Kassilem says

The summary is basically what was said on the front flap of the book, which is why I bought this book so many years ago, but the story isn't as exciting as the summary makes it out to be. Instead the crux of it is Horatrim in Rome. Also, his name is changed later in the book to the Roman Horatius Cocles, who was the Roman man who singlehandedly defended the Tiber Bridge, so I was hoping for that scene. It's nowhere in the book however. I concluded that since this is only the first in a supposed trilogy that it comes later. Anyways, there's nothing substantial here, but the story is entertaining. It's also a quick read, with relatively large font. Not the best, but not the worst.

KiplingKat says

Now don't get me wrong, the story is great. Reading at face value I thoroughly enjoyed it. Good characters, good "coming of age" story, great incorporation of the mythical elements. A very enjoyable book, a fun Saturday read. My only nit picks are a historian's pedantism.

I read Morgan Llewellyn's Red Branch (her version of the legend of Cu' Culainn) yonks ago. Back when I was a teenager, I think. It was very entertaining and made me very curious about the legend itself, which set me off on researching ancient Irish legends. She is very good at humanizing these mythic heroes, while incorporating the elements of native spirituality/religion and magic. Now, usually she's about the Celts, but for this one she (and Michael Scott) took on the Etruscans.

Part of the problem with writing about the Etruscans is that we're still learning about them. We have not even fully translated their language yet (which is one of those out of place oddball language that has no relationship to the languages around it). So most of what we know we're interpreting from art, grave goods and what is left from the layouts of their cities. (Which means it's pretty tentative.) We know little of their myths and legends. I guess that's was why Llewellyn and Brooks chose to pull their "Etruscan hero" from the annals of Ancient (I mean, really ancient, way before the Caesars) Rome: Horatius Colces. ("Hora Trim" being his "Etruscan name"). So it is no wonder that the story spends minimal time in "Eutria" and sends the hero off into the wild and eventually to Rome.

But then why not set the thing in Rome to begin with?

And there was the theme that "Man gives Gods form," but that is not really explored in the story, which is a straight up fantasy adventure.

And it's a very good fantasy adventure.

David Leemon says

If you want to go back to ancient Italy, this is a good book to read.

Kristen Gurri says

Too much fantasy with the fiction and a little too much dribble. Just couldn't do it. Plus, the cover art was embarrassing to explain to the kids.

David Andrews says

Etruscans is what I'd call a historical fantasy novel - based in (a surprisingly great deal of) fact but told through fantasy. It centers on the life of one Horatrim, a boy born to an Etruscan mother and an otherworldly father, who goes on to become a very important figure in ancient history. Along the way we also meet Tarquinius Superbus (the last King of Rome) and Lars Porsenna (an old Roman enemy) in a world that perfectly blends the superstitions of the ancient cultures of Italy with a fair amount of historical fact.

I haven't read a Morgan Llywelyn novel in ages - not since reading Llywelyn's take on Cuchulain back in high school - but I was soon reminded of his older works. Llywelyn has a unique ability to blend what we know with what we know can't exist in surprising and familiar ways. Etruscans is, with the addition of Michael Scott (who I'll now have to look up and read), perhaps the best example of Llywelyn's ability to do so.

The story in Etruscans is also top notch and well paced. The world building does the best job I've ever seen at portraying not just the physical reality that the ancients existed in (rabbit warren-like structures, unpaved roads, etc) but also the metaphysical reality they might've believed themselves to have existed in (spirits, monsters, and the Otherworld all feel very present and close).

I wasn't expecting much getting into Etruscans, if I'm honest, but having just been pleasantly surprised by John Maddox Roberts' SPQR novel, I have to say that Etruscans blew me away. It was a great read that has me hankering for more Morgan Llywelyn.

Emily Finch says

i found a beat up old copy of this book in a box in my grammas basement and thought it looked interesting... started reading and couldn't put it down. this has become one of my favorite reads.

Marco says

The book didn't live up to my expectations. It's a classic novel based on the myths of the Etruscans. The myths aren't really profoundly explained and the authors only brush a basic portrait of it all. As I've been told, the authors do a much better job with other cultural groups. Don't really bother reading this book if you're interested in learning more about the Etruscans, or the Romans, or any other group. This is not really a historic novel - I've even felt that this was more written for children than adults, but then, some gore passages would prevent me to give it to then.
