



## The Druid King

*Norman Spinrad*

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## **The Druid King** Norman Spinrad

A major triumph of historical fiction, **The Druid King**, is a masterly retelling of the life of the legendary general Vercingetorix and his brilliant crusade against the Roman invasion of Gaul. Vercingetorix was both a man of myth and a real historical figure—he managed, where others had failed, to unite the tribes of Gaul and lead them against the might of the entire Roman empire.

After watching his father's harrowing death, young Vercingetorix retreats to the forest where he learns the ways of the druids. Soon he must return to civilization to reclaim his birthright and his father's honor, but the city of his birth has changed. Now, he must confront the greatest military power the world has even known--the Roman legions of Julius Ceasar. This is the story of Vercingetorix, Druid King of Gaul.

## **The Druid King Details**

Date : Published August 10th 2004 by Vintage (first published February 1st 2003)

ISBN : 9780375724961

Author : Norman Spinrad

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## From Reader Review The Druid King for online ebook

### John says

Splendid Detour by Spinrad into Historical Fiction

Norman Spinrad makes a fine debut in historical fiction, with occasional lapses into fantasy, in this riveting tale about the legendary Celtic chieftain Vercingetorix, the leader of Gallic resistance against Roman legions commanded by Gaius Julius Caesar. Spinrad does an excellent job in describing Druid religious rites, and the profound influence they play on the thoughts and actions of Vercingetorix. He also provides us with mesmerizing descriptions of Gallic leaders and of Caesar and his generals. I thought I could see and smell the Gallic towns and their people, as well as the bloody battlefields of the Gauls and their Roman invaders. Without question, Spinrad's sympathies lie with Vercingetorix and his relationship with the woman warrior Rhia and Marah, his potential queen of a unified Gallic state. Although this isn't Spinrad's best work of fiction, it is still among his finest novels, rich in the vivid detail and lyrical prose that he is noted for in his science fiction.

(Reposted from my 2004 Amazon review.)

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### Merry says

DNF at about 70%.

Honestly, I read this so long ago that I can't remember the exact reasons, just that the plot seemed to become more ridiculous with each chapter and that I completely lost interest in the last quarter.

I have no intention of ever picking this up again.

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### Matthew says

Well done novel about possibly Caesar's greatest foe?

This novel takes a smart move in not just telling us of Caesar and his march through Gaul which made his name famous, but mostly about Vercingetorix, the leader of the peoples he eventually vanquished, this novel shows the lengths Caesar had to go to defeat him in open battle and how even then all was close, Vercingetorix had more men but much less disciplined, how he used guerrilla tactics and how he ran Caesar close, he still with this force nearly defeated Caesar, great read for anyone interested in Roman wars and especially Caesar

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### Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/857436.html>[return][return]The story of Vercingetorix vs Julius Caesar, not really successful because Spinrad can't quite make up his mind whether it is fantasy or not, and whether it is

for adults or young adults.

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### **Irmak says**

Vasat bir dönem dizisi gibi...

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### **Reba says**

Have you ever read a book that the story line is pretty good, but you figure a lot fewer words could have been used, and the author probably has a "word a day" calendar, and you can pick out the word for the day in any chapter? Well, this is one of those books.

It was a good story overall, but too many words. I know that may sound weird, given that it is a BOOK, but sometimes it just went on and on and on and on and on and on for no apparent reason. And I was afraid poor Vercingetorix was going to die a virgin!

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### **Carly Johnson says**

Beautifully written. Great historical fiction that has you wondering if it actually happened.

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### **Jane says**

Having read recently three of the Marius' mules / SJA Turney series of books on Caesar in Gaul, I wanted to read a novel about a warrior from the "other side". I enjoyed this one, the story of Vercingetorix, leader of the Averni tribe. As a boy he watches the horrific death of his father, is reared by the druids, and has a hallucinogenic Vision showing him his destiny and that of the Gallic peoples. In his Vision, he sees a statue of himself; to this day he is a French national hero. In the author's conception he has much druid knowledge, besides being a fighter. The story tells of his friendship with Caesar for awhile until Caesar's British invasion [which didn't last]; Caesar's deceit and manipulation turn him into Caesar's implacable enemy. From then on, he struggles against the Romans, uniting the Gaulish tribes. The novel culminates in the battle of Gergovia, siege and burning of Bourges and final defeat at Alesia. These three battles were well done and very exciting. At Alesia, Caesar's military engineer comes up with an ingenious solution: circumvallation. Details of this battle were so vivid, I wouldn't be surprised if the author used Caesar's own writings.

There were elements of fantasy, which I had to get used to. Caesar, in his falling-sickness seizures, would have visions; also Vercingetorix would have visions or dreams. Vercingetorix was fully fleshed out and sympathetic. Caesar was also a complete person, fitting our concept of him. All the other characters didn't really have personalities; they were there, it seemed to me, only as a background or sounding board to Vercingetorix or Caesar. The writing style was strange; there was a lot of surrealism and the author used certain phrases over and over, such as, 'the jaws of death'. There were maps on the endpapers but no notes or bibliographies, so I am assuming the history was not terribly accurate, except for the most important incidents. When I guessed that might be the case, I read the novel just as a very good story. I liked the

military strategies presented by both the Gauls and the Romans, with each side trying to outguess the other: what the other side likely would or would not do. I liked Caesar's march across the Alps in the winter to get to Gaul to surprise the Gauls. I am sure druid rituals were pretty much the ideas of the author, since we don't know much about the druids. The relationships with the two women characters were odd, to say the least. I recommend this novel, but maybe the history should be taken with a grain of salt...

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### **Larry says**

This was an ok book. Well crafted, interesting, a unique representation of the events. So far as I know, the narrative is compatible with Caesar's representation of the course of events. The battle scenes are over-the-top exciting in a cinematic way. My main impression was that this is heroic fantasy without the fantasy. Actual magic was replaced by a vague mysticism. An awful lot of the narrative revolves around Vercingetorix's repressed sexuality. It's a page-turner, and I'm glad I read it, but it is not a book I will ever own.

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### **MkB says**

I hereby propose a comprehensive act of Congress prohibiting fantasy authors from writing sex scenes.

Otherwise, the Druid King is pretty well written, just somewhat...trashy? The story is compelling enough (after all, the story of Caesar's conquest of Gaul has been passed for longer than the Bible), but the added psychotropic mushrooms and predestination don't really add too much to the story. Something about the crushing weight of Destiny diminishes, rather than enhances the legend of Vercingetorix.

I'm almost tempted to bump it to three stars because it kept me up reading until the wee hours of the morning, but I think that's largely a result of the fact that I can't resist swords and sorcery, no matter what the quality (except Xanth: Piers Anthony need not apply).

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### **Cassandra says**

I hated this book so much I can't even articulate it yet. So many things to be irritated by; where to start?

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### **David says**

Nice perspective on the history of Europe during Caesar's time. But the characters didn't make much sense. Their relationships and motivations seemed to be switched on and off as if by a light switch.

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### **Olethros says**

-La otra cara de La Guerra de las Galias.-

Género. Novela histórica.

Lo que nos cuenta. Vercingetórix es un joven galo que crece en su sociedad sin sospechar la importancia que tendrá después de que Julio César, objeto de rumores en Roma sobre malversación de fondos públicos, pida el proconsulado de la Galia Cisalpina y lo obtenga, junto al de la Narbonense.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

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### **Al Young says**

Spinrad is one of my favorite writers. There is just something about his style I love. No surprise then that I thought this was a great book.

It's not his usual sci-fi, but a detour into the world of Julius Caesar vs. Gaul. Yes, historical fiction, but much closer to Terry Brooks than Dorris Kearns Godwin. I don't know how much is true. Personally, I don't care. I read for a great story, and I got it.

It's Spinrad, so there's gratuitous sex and drugs thrown in (real life itself is not without sex and drugs, I am told), but he does it a bit different than what I expected. Not so much drugs as much as druid mysticism, and the sex ties into that as well.

Anyway, if you like Spinrad, I think it's definitely worth picking up. If you're new to Spinrad, I recommend giving it a shot, but treat it as fiction. I'm not even really a fan of fantasy books, but I loved it.

It would make a great movie. Memorable scenes. Memorable characters. A great plot

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### **Mark Schomburg says**

I guess with historical fiction the trap is that the fictionalization is locked into the hard framework of history, thereby limiting the possible flow and spontaneity of the novel. It's certainly true with this book, where terrible events happen which any real person would avoid, and characters are held forth to awful fates by allegiance to their own visions. This aspect makes the plot seem mechanical, and inevitable. It doesn't help that peripheral characters are not well developed enough to dispel their appearing to be convenient props. Well, for someone who has no prior knowledge of the time period, save for reading Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, the story is interesting to read, but lacks the poetic embellishments of a drama to dress it up. This is swords and storytelling, with cleverly depicted battle scenes which lend a lot of appreciation to the Roman war machine. Caesar and Vercingetorix come across as two sides of a flipped coin, while the world spins in the background, inconsequentially.

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