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JUNIOR
CLASSICS

THE INTERNATIONAL BEST-SELLER
THE EAGLE OF THE NINTH
BY ROSEMARY SUTCLIFF • READ BY CHARLIE SIMPSON



THE
EAGLE

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

1	Chapter 1 Frontier Fort	3:26
2	Centurion Marcus Flavius Aquila had seen little...	4:25
3	'You have brought clear skies with you...'	4:22
4	Chapter 2 Feathers in the Wind	3:53
5	As he threaded his way among...	3:09
6	The harvest was gathered in by the time...	5:56
7	Chapter 3 Attack	5:18
8	It was full daylight before the next attack...	4:18
9	'Open up!' he ordered. 'Form testudo.'	5:02
10	Chapter 4 The Last Rose Falls	4:25
11	Marcus lay for a long time with his forearm...	5:51
12	Chapter 5 Saturnalia Games	3:52
13	The evening meal was over, and old Stephanos...	3:18
14	And they went, Marcus travelling in a litter...	4:35
15	In the centre of the arena the two men were...	4:37
16	Chapter 6 Esca	4:33
17	In the grey of the next dawn, he heard the footfall...	4:01
18	The household varied a good deal in their reactions...	3:54
19	Chapter 7 Two Worlds Meeting	4:30
20	'You are cold,' said Marcus...	3:47
21	Marcus turned his head to see Esca coming towards him.	3:38
22	Chapter 8 The Healer with the Knife	3:35

23	Rufrius Galarius, one-time field surgeon...	5:28
24	Marcus was still unpleasantly cold in the pit of his stomach...	3:41
25	Chapter 9 Tribune Placidus	4:08
26	There were two strangers in the long room...	5:27
27	Chapter 10 Marching Orders	3:46
28	The Legate hesitated. Then he began to speak again...	4:02
29	There was a long pause. Uncle Aquila broke the silence...	4:28
30	Next morning, promising to pay his old friend...	3:33
31	Chapter 11 Across the Frontier	4:25
32	They had worked out a rough plan of campaign weeks ago...	3:44
33	Chapter 12 The Whistler in the Dawn	3:56
34	Later Esca lay down to sleep.	3:11
35	A few moments later they were back in their shelter...	3:35
36	Chapter 13 The Lost Legion	4:08
37	There was a long silence.	4:23
38	'It was autumn, and out of the mist the tribesmen...'	4:08
39	Marcus did not sleep much that night.	3:37
40	Chapter 14 The Feast of New Spears	4:02
41	She turned without a word, letting the curtain fall...	4:33
42	Next day began a bustle of preparation...	2:51
43	There was a sudden hiss and flare of flame...	3:52
44	Chapter 15 Venture into the Dark	4:07

45	Marcus realised here might be a chance to gather...	4:04
46	Next morning, sitting on an open hill shoulder...	3:51
47	They made their way to the recess...	5:15
48	Chapter 16 The Ring Brooch	4:41
49	The tribesmen set off back the way they had come.	4:36
50	Esca had cut back across the mountains...	5:50
51	Chapter 17 The Wild Hunt	4:49
52	Marcus did not answer, but settled down to ride...	5:55
53	Chapter 18 The Waters of Lethe	3:56
54	Marcus had long since got over his first unpleasant doubts...	4:00
55	They set out once more on the long march south.	5:40
56	Chapter 19 Tradui's Gift	4:17
57	When Esca was gone, he got up stiffly...	3:04
58	They ducked through the doorway into the descending darkness.	3:11
59	Chapter 20 Valedictory	3:35
60	Marcus was running an exploring hand over the young wolf...	4:36
61	No one moved or spoke at once when the report was finished.	5:07
62	Chapter 21 The Olive Wood Bird	3:40
63	For a while they sat there. Presently Marcus told her...	4:16
64	That evening, having written to the Legate for both of them...	3:50

Total time: 4:32:19

Rosemary Sutcliff

THE EAGLE OF THE NINTH

The Romans ruled Britain for nearly 400 years. To put this into perspective, it means that from the execution of Charles II in 1649 until the start of the 21st century it was a faraway, powerful city that governed the country. During all that time, the official language was Latin and the laws were Roman. Yet there was a huge difference between the Romans themselves and the ordinary Britons.

In the beginning, the Roman lifestyle must have stunned the local tribes who lived an Iron Age existence in basic huts arranged in small villages. The highly organised society that the Romans brought with them – an advanced civilisation made possible by complex government, a system of slavery and a vast international trade – would have seemed totally alien to the indigenous tribal culture.

In a relatively short period of time, the Romans transformed the island of Britain. Straight, stone roads were built through the land to allow faster communications from one town to another. Luxurious and ornate villas, with under-floor heating and mosaics,

gardens and fountains, were proof of the architectural capabilities; and the magnificent togas and jewellery worn by those of the Roman population who came to live, govern and make money demonstrated how rich and powerful they were.

Above all, the early Britons must have been shocked by the Legions and their military power – especially when Julius Caesar first invaded the island in 55 BC. The regiments of the Roman army were disciplined and trained beyond the imagination of the British tribesman.

The Legions marched in order, and had highly trained military procedures. These governed all activities – from advancing and fighting, to the more mundane task of building of a camp every night to defend against surprise attacks.

The Roman infantry soldier was a fearsome opponent. He would be uniformed in light armour, with a large shield, a spear, and a short stabbing sword. These soldiers could perform complex manoeuvres, wheeling one way, then another, and they dealt death to brave but disorganised

'barbarians' who just rushed straight at them.

The Legions could march 20 or 30 miles a day behind their 'Eagle', the symbol of the Legion itself, and fight a battle at the end of it. Then they could rest securely behind the walled defences of their camp, even if they were hundreds of miles from Londinium (London) or Camulodunum (Colchester).

But the Britons weren't a pushover. Julius Caesar first landed with 12,000 men from the 7th and 10th Legions, and, fairly easily, subdued the local area. He stayed for about a month before sailing back across the channel to Gaul (France). He realised then that to truly conquer Britain was a bigger job than he first anticipated.

So he returned the following year, landing with a much stronger force of 30,000 soldiers. He swiftly gained more control, beating all the forces paraded against him. Various tribes united under Cassivellaunus to try and rout the Romans, but Caesar again won skirmish after skirmish, battle after battle. The tribes tried diversionary tactics: they sent messengers to Gaul asking the Gaulish tribes to attack the Romans in Gaul while Caesar was in England. Their wish was granted: Caesar had to return briefly to Gaul to quell uprisings there. But in the end, after many

hard battles, the Roman forces of Julius Caesar won in Gaul and in Britain.

Ten years later, on 15 March 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated in Rome. It then took another 100 years before Emperor Claudius came to England (AD 43) with major forces in a determined effort to control the country. They succeeded, overcoming all opposition. Claudius wanted to make an impact on the local Britons, demonstrating the power of Rome and his rule as the Emperor. According to one report he rode into Londinium on an elephant, which must have caused a huge surprise.

New towns sprang up built in the Roman style as the civilisation exerted its influence on the tribal regions. One tribe after another was forced to capitulate. There were occasional rebellions as tribes tried forlornly to throw off the Roman yoke; but the force of the Legions was simply too great.

By AD 49 there were Roman fortresses at Camulodunum (Colchester), Noviomagus Regnorum (Chichester), Longthorpe (Peterborough), Glevum (Gloucester) and Lindum (Lincoln) – as well as Londinium, which was important because it was the best place to ford the River Thames. In AD 51, Caractacus, one of the last British kings to oppose Roman rule, was captured and sent

to Rome in chains.

Unrest continued. Heavy-handed rule by the Romans made Queen Boadicea of the Icenii tribe revolt. She sacked various towns, including Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium (St Albans), with much slaughter. But she lost a key battle to Paulinus in AD 60 and committed suicide along with her daughters.

Over the next decades, other Roman rulers and generals strengthened their grip on the island, pushing west to Wales and the isle of Anglesey and north to Doncaster and York. The Roman forces went further north towards Scotland, where they encountered fierce opposition from the Caledonii (the Picts) yet had early successes. By AD 83, they could say that the whole island was under Roman rule.

But by AD 90, after constant guerrilla attacks by the Picts, the Romans decided to abandon their settlements in Caledonia and move south. Skirmishes continued as the Picts and the Britons harried Roman movements.

It was on one of these occasions in AD 117 that the 9th Legion, marching along the River Tay, simply disappeared. The terrain was difficult, with woods and valleys, and many places ideal for an ambush. The Legion set out... and didn't return. In the long reign

of the Roman Empire – over 1,000 years – this happened only on very few occasions. But it happened here, and it is on this true event that Rosemary Sutcliff based her classic novel *The Eagle of the Ninth*.

She researched her period carefully. We get a very good idea of what it was like to live in Roman Britain at this time – after Emperor Hadrian had started to build his famous wall (AD 122) to keep the Picts at bay. Hadrian's Wall ran for 73 miles, from the Solway Firth in the West to the River Tyne in the east, and its purpose, as Hadrian himself said, was 'to separate Romans from Barbarians'. Roman soldiers, stationed along the line, took six years to build it in its basic form. You can visit sections of it even now, and they are very interesting to see.

We can imagine what it must have been like for the young centurion Marcus Flavius Aquila and his slave Esca to go north into wild and dangerous country, far from the protection of the Roman Legions, and what a brave thing it must have been to undertake.

This is the background behind *The Eagle of the Ninth*.

Notes by Nicolas Soames

Rosemary Sutcliff was born in 1920. As a child she was ill with a form of arthritis, which meant that she passed much of her childhood sitting in a chair listening to her mother read to her. (Curiously, she herself didn't learn to read until she was nine, according to one report.)

Rosemary Sutcliff was first advised to become a painter of miniatures, but in her mid-20s started to write. Her first story was about an English chieftain trying to resist the Roman invasion, but it is now lost. In 1950 Oxford University Press published her first two novels, *The Chronicle of Robin Hood* and *The Queen Elizabeth Story*. They were the first of a long list of historical novels which entertained and informed generations of young readers.

Referring to the detailed notes taken during two months of research on her chosen situation, she wrote in long hand and produced nearly 2,000 words a day. She spent about eight months writing a story, devoting most of each day to it.

Rosemary Sutcliff wrote about 50 books. Among her best-sellers are *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954), *The Silver Branch* (1957) and *The Lantern Bearers* (1959) (the three stories concerning Marcus Flavius Aquila), *Black Ships Before Troy* and *Beowulf: Dragonslayer*.

She died on 23 July 1992. She had been putting the finishing touches to her last novel, *Sword Song*, on that very morning.

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Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

Cover picture: Roman centurion during the building of Hadrian's Wall, detail of mural depicting the History of Northumbria, c.1861 by Scott, William Bell (1811–90) Wallington Hall, Northumberland. Courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library

Rosemary Sutcliff

THE EAGLE OF THE NINTH

Read by **Charlie Simpson**

Roman Britain: Marcus Flavius Aquila, a young centurion is forced into retirement after a wound in his first major engagement against a rebel British tribe. It allows him the freedom to embark upon a dangerous mission to find out what happened to the Ninth Legion which, years before, disappeared in the savage lands of the Picts. Will he find out what happened to the men, led by his father, who never returned? And will he recover the Eagle, the symbol of Roman dominance and power?



Charlie Simpson won the Carleton Hobbs Radio Award in 1989 and the Best New Actor in Radio – Radio Times Comedy and Drama Awards in 1992. His TV credits include *The Bill*, *Kavanagh QC* and *Soldier Soldier*. His theatre work includes *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest* for the English Shakespeare Company and *The Blue Angel* at the Gielgud Theatre. He also reads the part of Freddie Eynsford Hill in *Pygmalion* and The Clerk's Tale from *The Canterbury Tales II* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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