

Liqian – One Pager

Title: *Liqian* – by David. A. Bradley

Genre: Historical/Action Adventure

Logline: When Marcus Crassus leads his army into the Parthian desert, the small number of survivors are made prisoners of war and are marched to distant lands to become soldiers of fortune.

Synopsis: In 53 BC Marcus Crassus’ army winter at the city of Hierapolis. Titus Marcius Turbo has been promoted to the most senior man in the ranks, Primus Pilus, but is envied by Marcus Camillus who believes the honour has been denied him and given to his rival due to nepotism.

As a detachment of Gallic cavalry ride into the city Marcus Crassus intervenes when a wrestling contest is arranged between one of the Gauls and the Greek warrior Megabocchus. Instead, Crassus places his new lead centurion, Turbo to fight the Gaul’s champion.

Afterwards, Turbo bathes and plays drinking games with Publius Crassus, the general’s son and favourite, along with his friends. They gamble for a slave girl, which Turbo feels ambivalent about since his elder brother, Chrysogonus is a freedman. In high spirits, the 70,000 strong army marches across the open desert towards the Euphrates. However, Turbo, along with the Gallic chief, Egus, and the military tribune, Gaius Cassius, believe Crassus is acting hastily and is being misled by his Armenian and Arab allies. The battle of Carrhae begins when 10,000 Parthian horsemen reveal themselves in the desert. The Romans form a giant square formation, shields raised in a testudo position, its roof protecting them from the onslaught of enemy arrows. Realising that they are trapped under an endless stream of enemy fire, Publius Crassus leads a cavalry charge out of the defensive formation. With a double cohort of men, Turbo charges after the young commander.

When the Parthian’s feigned retreat turns on Publius Crassus, Turbo tries to return his men to safety, but it is too late. With severe wounds, Turbo and Camillus are faced with a fight to the death or capture. They choose the former, but their wounds weaken them. However, their fighting spirit impresses the enemy, and they are taken prisoner as the night draws in and the Roman lines fall.

After being paraded through the city of Seleucia, the surviving Romans are marched for several months to the eastern reaches of the Parthian empire. Along the way they save their slave masters from bandits and are recruited as the garrison of the city of Antiocha Margiana. Turbo then finds himself in the middle of a power struggle with the local satrap and his personal bodyguard. And while the city is being harassed by a mysterious horseback army, Turbo finds Camillus trying to usurp his authority and causing trouble with an eastern traveller from far down the silk road.

When Camillus executes the satrap’s bodyguards, he unwittingly puts everyone in danger. With a better grasp of the Greek spoken in the region, Turbo tries to confront Camillus, but their divergent leadership styles break the Romans into two camps. Unexpectedly, a traitor from Crassus’ war council appears in the city and the men call for revenge. Egus, the Gallic chief who was also captured after Carrhae, breaks order to seek vengeance and the city descends into chaos. With a fire starting in their local tavern, the mysterious horsemen, the Xiongnu, see their chance and descend upon the city. Setting aside their rivalry Turbo and Camillus work together to fend off the attack but are overcome when a new friend of Turbo betrays the city to the invaders.

Themes: Loyalty, identity, the value of citizenship.