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Southern Minnesota, August 1862. Smoke fills the horizon and blood soaks the prairie as the Sioux fight to drive white settlers from their ancestral homeland. Sarah Wakefield and her young son and baby daughter are fleeing for their lives when two warriors capture them. One is Hapa, who intends to murder them. The other is Chaska, an old acquaintance who promises to protect the family. Chaska shelters them in his mother's tepee, but with emotions running so high among both Indians and whites, the danger only intensifies. As she struggles to protect herself and those she loves, Sarah is forced to choose between doing what others expect of her and following her own deep beliefs.

Blood Moon: A Captive's Tale Details

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From Reader Review Blood Moon: A Captive's Tale for online ebook

Marlene Moore says

A Great History Lesson and True Story

While reading this story I could see that prejudice against another race has not really changed in all these years. It saddens me to think that there may never be an end to this evil. I really was pleased that this account showed the compassion of many of the Natives. Too often, they were deemed evil, heathens or worse. Just as we find good in every race, there is also bad in every race. I enjoyed this book and think it's a good book for our youth as well.

Amika Press says

KIRKUS REVIEWS

www.kirkusreviews.com

In this work of historical fiction set in the Midwest during the Civil War, Sioux warriors seize a woman and her children.

Sarah Wakefield lives in southern Minnesota in Sioux territory—her husband, John, is a government-appointed doctor assigned to the reservation. The regular annuity paid to the Sioux is yet again delayed, and already strained relations between them and their often cruel white counterparts become even more acrimonious. Finally, when it becomes clear an outburst of violence is imminent, John sends Sarah and her two young children away, but her escort is murdered and she is captured by two Sioux fighters. One of them, Hapa, is eager to kill her, but his brother-in-law, Chaska, protects Sarah from harm and vows to remain her faithful guardian. While in captivity, Sarah is in constant danger, but Chaska and his mother, Ina, vigilantly watch over her, help her blend in, and hide her when necessary. She even flirts with the possibility of becoming one of them: “If I knew I would never be rescued, I think I could be content among the Sioux. Ina has become like a mother to me—certainly, a better mother than the one I left in Rhode Island. And Chaska is one of the most honorable men I have ever known.” When finally rescued, she has to save Chaska’s life by testifying to his admirable behavior and repair her own tattered reputation as a sympathizer and traitor.

Chatlien (*The Ambitious Madame Bonaparte*, 2013) writes with nuanced sensitivity, nimbly cataloging the horrors each side visits upon the other. Even Sarah’s marriage is depicted without yielding to facile simplicity—her husband can be sweet and chivalrous but also petty and cold. In a few spots, the author seems tempted by the desire to impart a didactic lesson—there is good and bad among all kinds—but resists even these minor concessions to moralistic judgment. In addition, Chatlien’s mastery of the historical period—especially the life and culture of the Sioux—is notable and creates a fictional atmosphere of authenticity.

A subtle dramatization of the conflict between white settlers and Native Americans in the 19th century.

Lauri says

The Sioux(Dakota) Indians were a murderous lot. Were they? Were the Americans the only victims of that time? Racism, gossip and fear are the enemies of peace for all people.

I love this book! There were victims on both sides. This author does an excellent job of helping the reader sympathize with both.

I found the main character, Sarah, to be completely believable. A good, Christian wife and mother, she tries to be faithful to her calling despite the internal turmoil she feels over past and present circumstances beyond her control. She is driven above all to be faithful to God and her husband (no matter his flaws), and to protect her children. These convictions are difficult commitments in the most peaceful times, but to remain steadfast while in fear for your life is near to impossible.

NOTE: this book is R rated. There is a description of a brutal murder and there is a bedroom scene between husband and wife which, while not tawdry, is not appropriate for some readers.

Elissa Matthews says

I enjoyed reading it for the sake of the history, the information, the events. However, what I look for in fiction versus memoir is the artistic license to dig deeper into the character relationships and emotions. While those elements were certainly present, I was disappointed in the lack of complexity and subtlety around the portrayal of those relationships.

Perhaps because of that, I enjoyed the ending more than the middle - when Sarah returns and all the players come together - Sarah, Chaska, Ina, John, the children, the bitterness of the soldiers, the scorn of the town and church - suddenly the richness and depth of the story really picks up. I would have liked the whole book to be like this.

Nina Romano says

A fantastic account of white woman's experience being an Indian captive!

Blood Moon whisked me away to Minnesota in the mid 1800s where I followed Sarah's difficult path living among the Sioux. It was wonderful to read a fictionalized but true account in such a well-researched novel. I vividly saw the daily experiences of a captured woman with her children living and hiding, fearful for her life and the lives of her little ones as she fought to survive as a captive of the Sioux Indians. What made this novel so poignant were the many details that brought the fiction alive because it was based on factual events. I was able to envision an evolved story every step of the way from an abused girl, daughter, wife and neighbor--each stage of her development. Ruth Hull Chatlien seduced me with her prose and delivered a strong woman character that will stay with me forever. I heartily recommend this book for any reader interested in American and

Kate Hennessy-keimig says

Well drawn characters in a sad and layered story

I really enjoyed this book. Sarah was a believable and sympathetic character, and I found myself feeling with and for her throughout her captivity and especially afterwards when no one would accept her truth. All the main characters were dimensional and nuanced which made it easy to enter into their stories and understand the complexity of their situations and decisions.

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

"Blood Moon" is the story of Sarah, a woman who had a very tough early life and was thrown out of the house for not sins of her own but the sins of her stepfather. When she marries a doctor after being abandoned by her family, she finally thinks that the rough part of her life is over. On the frontier of Minnesota, there is still danger all around as Sarah and her children are taken by warring Native American tribes. Sarah will once again have to use her mental toughness to survive and to help her children survive.

The characters in this book are all well drawn and fascinating. Our main character, Sarah is especially interesting. While other white captives seem to fight the Native Americans every step of the way, Sarah strongly believes that showing kindness and respect to her captors is the way to ensure her life and the lives of her children are not taken. This will not make her many friends among the other white captives who begin to see Sarah as a traitor who actually cares for the Sioux that have taken them. I found the juxtaposition between how Sarah treats her captors (and how they treat her back) and how the other captives act (and how the Sioux treat them) absolutely fascinating. Yes, this book is about the Sioux wars of the mid-1800s but it also has a more universal message, which I really enjoyed.

I will admit that I didn't know much about this time period and the events in the book. I really liked how much historical detail the author packed into the book. I loved reading about the home life of the settlers as well as the Native Americans. The author does a great job of bringing both the characters that fill this book as well as the vast settings to life. This is a good book that brought me to a new time and place!

Patty says

I tend to read more Europe based historical fiction than US based but I am trying to change that. I find tales of the Western expansion of particular interest probably because of living in Montana. It was a difficult time for both the settlers and the Native Americans and I think the stories need to be told.

This book is based on true events; Sarah Wakefield lived with her husband and two children in Minnesota. Relations with the Sioux are breaking down in the years just ahead of the Civil War as the payments to them from the government are late and the Sioux are starving because they are no longer allowed to hunt on their ancestral lands. The soldiers at the Agency won't release the trade goods without money despite it being a government facility.

As conditions deteriorate Sarah's husband decides to send her to a more settled area but as she is traveling she and her escort are attacked. Her escort is killed and one of the two Indians wants to kill Sarah as well but

the other remembers that she and her husband (a doctor) cared for the Sioux and did try and help them. This man, Chaksa takes Sarah and her two children under his care. So starts Sarah's odyssey as a guest/hostage of the Sioux.

Ms. Hull Chatlien mentions in her author's note that she kept pretty close to Sarah's narrative in writing her fictional retelling. The narrative was incredibly fascinating and I can't begin to imagine what it must have been like for Sarah to be in this situation with an infant and small child. The only thing keeping her from death was Chaksa and his mother. Many Indians wanted her dead just because she was white.

I found myself very involved in the story, almost as much as I was there. Ms. Hull Chatlien really brought the period to life for me. Sarah was, at times, not a very likable character. Nor was her husband. At times I felt very sorry for Sarah and what she had to endure and at other times I wanted to slap her for some of the things that she did. I guess that makes her a very well rounded character. Whether that is Ms. Hull Chatlien's doing or the real Sarah was like that I don't know. I'm very interested in reading the original diary now to see how it compares.

I'm keeping this book in hopes of finding the time to reread it. It is certainly a thrilling story with much going on. I do find fiction based on fact far more interesting than a fully made up tale. It is a difficult story to read for any number of reasons – the hate on both sides is very hard to experience. It is not very different from today but at least today there isn't wholesale slaughter.

4.5

Pat Camalliere says

I am a big fan of historical fiction, and stories about the American frontier especially peak my interest. Ruth Hull Chatlien's new release satisfied my interests and then some in her true story of Sarah Wakefield. After being taken into captivity by Sioux warriors in 1862 Minnesota, Sarah faced crisis after crisis in an almost unbelievable story of survival, which was possible only because of the woman's determination and bravery, as well as that of her two young children. Yet the real heart of the story, in my opinion, was the development of the characters. Seen through Sarah's eyes, she did not assume that every person was her adversary, but allowed each to reveal himself or herself through their actions, including both native and white characters. Not all acted as one would predict, including her own husband, which enhanced the stark reality of her situation. Read this book. You won't be sorry!

Jordan says

There are many Indian captive tales told over the course of America's history but this obscure story of one woman's struggle during the latter days of the American westward expansion is told to brilliant effect in the hands of this skilled author. I was not expecting the level of historical detail and powerful message in this account based on the journals of Sarah Wakefield, the wife of an Indian agent during the final days of the Indian Wars against the Sioux in South Dakota, circa 1870's. When a government SNAFU leaves her and her husband between a rock and hard place trying to provide promised supplies to the Reservation, they are left to blame for the tribe's deprivations. When conditions come to an impasse, Sarah's home is overtaken by a band of enraged Sioux. She and her small children are captured while her husband is away. From there she

endures months of life threatening encounters and hardships that would break even the hardest of spirits. Yet Sarah endures and is willing to remain alive and preserve her family at all cost, even if that means adopting a whole new way of life with captors who have become her friends and protectors. Told with honest, compassion and a balance of good and evil pervading all human cultures, Chatlien's novel never comes off "preachy" or overbearing. Rather, the reader is presented with one woman's view of life in adversity when there are truly no winners or losers. In the end, Sarah is faced with an even more difficult choice when tables are turned and she must defend the one man who kept her safe from the army who did little to rescue her. A must read for historical fiction fans or anyone who loves a good story about strong characters in interesting times.

Gina Smith says

Based on the true story of Sarah Wakefield who was captured by the Sioux in 1862, this book tells her story of survival. Ruth Chatlien does a remarkable job of developing all of the characters as complex people with positive and negative traits. Many times while reading this, I would stop and ask myself what I would do in Sarah's situation. I definitely struggled with her decision to stay in an abusive marriage. Chatlien was able to clearly show the lack of choices open to women in the 1800s. Sarah had several things going against her as a woman in that time period, actually. I highly recommend this book for lovers of historical fiction and empowerment of women. The choices Sarah made may or may not be what you or I would make, but Chatlien's development of the character, Sarah Wakefield reminds us that we all face decisions affected by our past experiences, and as women, even today.

Rita Wright says

I was captivated by this story. How sad the American Indian has been treated in the United States. This story is about courage and standing up for what is right even when it's an unpopular decision.

Amy says

Blood Moon: A Captive's Tale is quite a captivating tale to read based on actual events. Because of the historical details, it is not an easy read at times. I thought Ruth Hull Chatlien was able to capture the historical events perfectly. She definitely did her research on Sarah Wakefield and her children being kidnapped by the Native Americans. I really enjoyed it and liked that the author added notes at the end to tell what really happened after the book ended. I was fascinated at times and even heartbroken at others. I found Blood Moon: A Captive's Tale to be a must read and would give it five plus stars. Highly recommended.

I received this book from the author. This review is 100% my own honest opinion.

Terry says

I have to say, I love this book! The writing was riveting and Sarah's experiences after being captured by the Sioux were expertly portrayed. The character development and setting descriptions were amazing. I felt like I

was with Sarah as she hid out one night in the rain to save hers and her children's lives. Highly recommended!

Elinor says

I read this book quickly, as I was eager to find out what happened to poor Sarah Wakefield. Her story was compelling, as I'm sure many of us have wondered what it would have been like to endure captivity at the hands of another race. Rather than experience the suffering and abuse that one might expect, Sarah was protected by a Sioux family, although she had some very narrow escapes.

Because the author was pretty much faithful to Sarah's own memoirs, the story lacked the dramatic narrative arc of a work of fiction. Blood Moon reads more like a historical journal than a plot-driven novel. However, read in the spirit of factual accuracy rather than fiction, it was extremely well-done. Sarah and the other characters were complex, especially the natives themselves, who revealed both positive and negative traits. Sarah's struggles with her own conscience, her fear for her children, her sense of duty, her mixed feelings toward her husband, her appreciation for the Sioux way of life, even her attraction to the native man Chaska -- all these were skilfully described.
