

Dominion: The Chronicles of the Invaders (The Chronicles of the Invaders Trilogy Book 3)

By John Connolly, Jennifer Ridyard

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The third thrilling Chronicles of the Invaders adventure from *New York Times* bestselling author John Connolly and Jennifer Ridyard mixes classic sci-fi with gripping suspense and richly drawn characters.

Syl Hellais and Paul Kerr have traveled through Derith, the mysterious wormhole from which no traveler has ever returned. Yet Derith's secrets are darker than they imagined, and trapped in a dimension beyond their own, they finally emerge to discover a universe that has moved on without them.

Years have passed, and civil war rages among the Illyri. It is whispered that the Earth is lost, prey to the alien parasites known as the Others, and other worlds will soon follow. Most shocking of all, the sinister Archmage Syrene of the Nairene Sisterhood has disappeared into the bowels of the Sisterhood's lair.

But before she cloistered herself, Archmage Syrene chose her replacement. The Sisterhood has a new leader, with her own plans for the future of her race. Now Syl and Paul, teenagers in a deadly adult world, must find a way to change the course of history and save the lives of billions. They have but one hope—for Syl Hellais is changing…

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Editorial Review

Review
"Densely plotted and decidedly grown-up, this is YA fiction for readers who are bored of fluff and sparkles." (SFX Magazine (UK))

“I love science fiction, I love solid, real characters, I love adventure, and I love to be continually surprised. Conquest has all of this and more. Feeling fresh from beginning to end, and written with a torrential, captivating pace, I highly recommend this book!" (James Dashner, NYT bestselling author of THE MAZE RUNNER)

"A striking novel, devoid of the usual Young Adult conventions and far better for it: from the choice of location to the complex and involving plot that defies the expectations of its target market, this is a novel that does not fear to take the reader to darker places than others of its ilk. The strong characterisation of Steven, Peter and our heroine Syl make their extraordinary adventure all the more believable, and bring an often imagined future for humanity very much to life. A brilliant beginning to what will no doubt become an epic series." (Dean Crawford, author of COVENANT and IMMORTAL)

"This novel is entertaining and addictive science fiction!” (RisingShadows.net)

“*Conquest* is over-flowing with originality, adventure and damn fine writing – fans and newcomers alike should be clamoring for it.” (BOLO Books)

“I wish everything in the science fiction genre was like The Chronicles.” (Bookreporter.com)

About the Author

Connolly, John

John Connolly is the author of the Charlie Parker series of mystery novels, the supernatural collection *Nocturnes,* the Samuel Johnson Trilogy for younger readers, and (with Jennifer Ridyard) the Chronicles of the Invaders series. He lives in Dublin, Ireland. For more information, see his website at JohnConnollyBooks.com, or follow him on Twitter @JConnollyBooks.

Ridyard, Jennifer

Jennifer Ridyard was born in England and grew up in South Africa, where she worked as a journalist for many years. *Conquest* and *Empire* are the first two novels in the Chronicles of the Invaders series with her partner, John Connolly, who she lives with in Dublin. Find Jennifer on Twitter @JennieRidyard. For more about this series, visit ChroniclesOfTheInvaders.com.

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Dominion

CHAPTER 1

Together the two old soldiers strolled the hallways of Edinburgh Castle. On a fine morning such as this the building appeared more beautiful than ever, vast and imposing, a vision of its former glory. Jasmine bloomed heady and sweet in the courtyards, its scent wafting through open doorways on a summer breeze. Gray doves cooed at the windows, and shafts of light spilled onto freshly swept floors. Even the sandstone walls had been buffed, and now the buttresses and buildings of the castle gleamed atop their rock in the pale Edinburgh sun.

All of this had been done at the command of the last Illyri governor of the islands of Britain and Ireland, Lord Danis.

It was blissfully quiet, also at Lord Danis's instruction, quieter than the old castle had been in all its long history. No soldiers bustled past, no patrol vehicles rumbled by, no airships zipped overhead, no gunfire sounded from beyond the walls, and so the lifelong comrades could continue their daily walk without interruption. It was as if the Illyri race had never been here, nor the tourists that once thronged the cobbled courtyards, nor the medieval kings, Jacobite rebels, and Celtic fighters who had preceded them. Perhaps even the long-ago footfalls of the English conquerors had never worn slow pathways into the flagstone floors. Here, in the company of Captain Peris, his long-standing companion, Lord Danis hoped to find a little peace.

The pair moved gradually toward the main castle entrance, tracing the routes they'd known for so long yet meeting nobody they recognized—in fact, seeing nobody at all. They were alone in the castle. At the gateway they stood beneath the Latin script carved above the archway.

"Nemo me impune lacessit," Danis read, and there was mockery in his voice.

He always stopped and considered the words at this point on their regular walks. Sometimes he made no comment; sometimes he shrugged; sometimes he shook his head; sometimes he swore. On more that one occasion he had broken down and wept, though that had not happened for some time now. Perhaps his heart was finally mending, thought Peris. Or hardening.

"No one who harms me will go unpunished," translated Peris, as he always did.

"It would be better if it read 'No good deed will go unpunished,'?" said Danis, and after a moment he sighed. "I should never have let them go, Peris."

Peris managed a weak smile. "You must miss her terribly," he said.

"Miss whom?" said Danis, and he jabbed angrily at a button on the wall. Immediately the hologram of the castle disappeared and they were once again standing beside a window overlooking a nighttime garden, where milky evening moths supped from heavy, stinking blossoms. Dual moons shone brightly in the sky above, illuminating the high wall that enclosed the grounds of their gracious residence.

Their gracious prison.

"Why, the Lady Fian, of course," said Peris. "Your wife. You miss your wife."

"Yes, of course," came the governor's reply. He had been forced to abandon Fian on Earth during the last

panicked exodus from the planet, and it was assumed that she was dead. He lived with his guilt, but only barely.

Danis laughed, but it was a hard, clattering sound. “For a moment I thought you meant my darling daughter,” he said.

“Well, you miss Ani too, naturally,” agreed Peris.

“No!” Danis spat the denial out like a piece of bad meat. “Not my daughter. Never her. Ani is no longer blood to me.”

Peris opened his mouth to protest, but Danis had turned to leave, and his back was as solid, his heart as impenetrable, as the walls surrounding the lush garden. The stooped Illyri muttered to himself as he went, declaring that he had had quite enough for today, that he was fantasizing about his bed, and as the governor shuffled away the security bracelet on his ankle flashed once, transmitting details of his movements to those who watched them, night and day.

• • •

Alone but not tired—for how could one be tired after a virtual stroll around a nonexistent castle, around buildings that had long since been reduced to rubble and ash?—Peris stared out into the silver-lined darkness. In truth, he wasn’t sure what to think about Ani, or what to believe.

As far as Danis was concerned, his daughter had betrayed them all. She was a true Nairene, turning her back on family and friends in favor of the red witches. She had stood by while her own father was locked up, leaving her mother forsaken on an alien world, and Danis refused to believe her claims that his imprisonment was necessary for his own protection. His only child, whom he had once loved so much—and still did, deep in his soldier’s heart—was dead to him.

Yet Ani was nearly twenty-one now, and in terms of the planet where she had been born, according to the traditions of Earth, she would soon come of age. However, Peris suspected that Ani had grown up much earlier than that, four years earlier in fact, on the day of the teenage killings on Erebos.

The day that started the civil war.

He remembered it as if it was yesterday, but sometimes he wondered if he truly remembered it at all. Could he really trust his own recollection when, at the time, the flesh on his arm was being eaten away as if by virulent, ravenous bacteria, apparently at the instigation of a teenage girl, a mere novice of the Nairene Sisterhood? He wouldn’t have believed it himself if those around him hadn’t been dying too, by fire, or in fountains of blood, or with their bones inexplicably fractured by invisible, violent hands, the audible snapping a soundtrack to their agonies.

And then Syl Hellais—the daughter of Peris’s old master, Lord Andrus—had intervened, a tornado of fury turning all the destructive forces in the room back on their makers, and there had been more suffering, more death, and the bodies had piled up around him, so many young, broken bodies. Ani had arrived too, and words were exchanged between the two friends, harsh words that could not be unsaid, and a lifelong friendship had crumpled as if it were nothing.

Still, Syl had left, and Ani had stayed. Like a silver-haired angel, she’d remained by Peris’s side, holding his

hand, until the Archmage Syrene had appeared.

What had happened in all the years since now seemed inevitable—that much Peris had come to understand. Yet still, he clung to the words Ani had uttered before Syl had fled, for they seemed to be the only hope left for his fractured, war-torn people.

“You seem determined to forget that the Sisterhood was founded with a noble purpose,” Ani had told Syl, “but I shall make it my mission to reclaim that purpose, however long it takes . . .”

Peris had tried to explain all this to Lord Danis, but he would hear none of it.

As for Paul, Syl, and those who had fought alongside them, they were surely dead, because nothing that entered the Derith wormhole ever emerged from it again. Peris just hoped their deaths had been clean, and quick. Sometimes a quick death was all that one could hope for. But perhaps they were all beyond hope itself now, even those still left alive.

What they really needed was a miracle.

Users Review

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