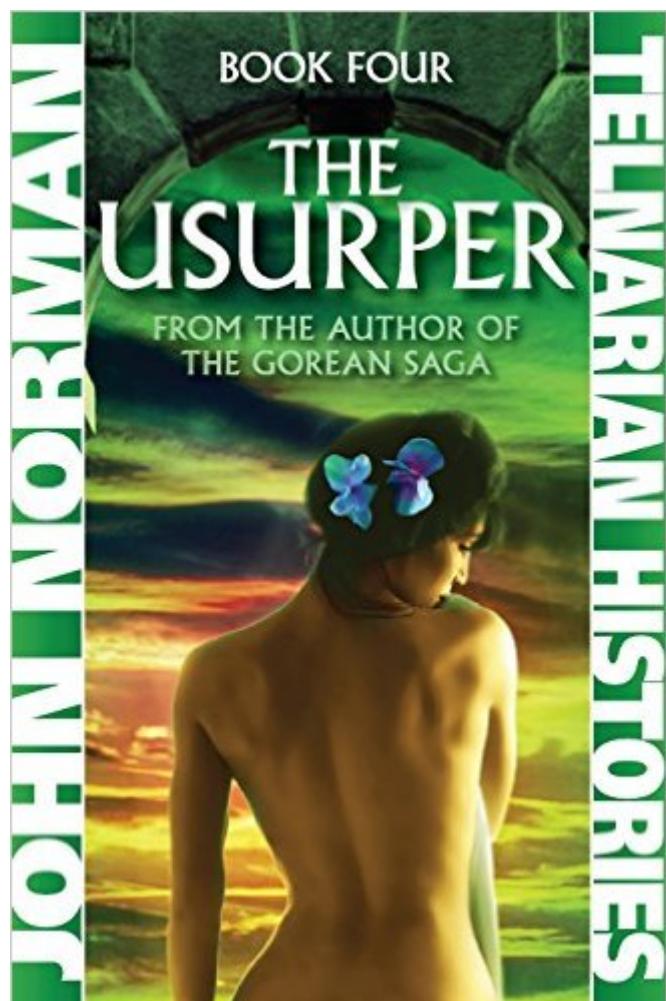


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# The Usurper (Telnarian Histories)



## Synopsis

The fourth volume in John Norman's epic Telnarian Histories describes the continuing rise to power of an unsung warrior thrown into the maelstrom of ambition, treachery, and violence that is the galactic empire. When Filene, a former noblewoman masquerading as a slave, attempts to assassinate the ascendant tribal king, Ottonius, she fails and becomes fully enslaved. The story of her education in proper submission is told in counterpoint to the tale of the powerful but primitive warrior who finds himself drawn into intrigues affecting the destiny of a threatened and crumbling empire. This ambitious novel, written on an interstellar scale, follows the latest adventures of a man who has fought and killed his way out of obscurity to become a newly crowned king. As events unfold, he finds himself on a bloody and violent path that may lead to the imperial throne itself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A little over 20 years ago John Norman stepped outside the world (if not the themes) of Gor and delivered a trilogy entitled the Telnarian Histories. Whereas the Gor novels were primarily fantasy epics tinged with science fiction elements, this new trilogy flipped that around, being more of a traditional space opera with fantasy influences. In terms of narrative, little has changed over the years, with *The Usurper* having the same sense of style that fans have become used to, but which may unsettle a new reader. Expository prose is often long and blocky, with descriptions that can stretch into a second page without a paragraph break, and the amount of detail surrounding the

physical, mental, emotional, and psychological realities of slavery is often exhausting. That's not to say it isn't fascinating, or sometimes necessary to the plot, but it may take some readers deeper into a submissive mindset than they're comfortable with. Dialogue is often very formal, carefully structured and delivered as if for an audience, with little of the casual banter we so often expect of the genre. Again, that's not a flaw or a complaint, just an observation on what makes Norman's writing unique. Overall, however, the prose here is stronger and more polished than what fans may be used to, with phrases like "the airless, lonely, nigh-vacant deserts between world" having an almost poetic quality to them. The world-building is exceptionally strong here, as it was in the Gor saga, with a fully realized history of conquest and rebellion. Culturally, there are significant Greco-Roman influences to the story, but there's also a bit of a Conan-esque flavor to Ottonius, the barbarian King.

**The Usurper** (Telnarian Histories) John Norman

This is the fourth book in the Telnarian series where we continue to see the transformation of Ottonius, everyone's beloved barbarian warrior. He may now be leader of his own people, but it clear that others fear him; especially those of the Empire. The Empire sends a free woman disguised as a slave to assassinate him. When she does not succeed, Captain Ottonius realizes that he must find the persons responsible for sending the assassin. Along with his most trusted advisors, he leaves his home on a journey to discover his heritage and uncover the power he possesses that can affect the empire. Filene, a formal noble woman, currently a free woman is sent on a mission to kill Ottonius the tribal King. She is provided the knife and the cover. She enters the camp disguised as a slave and attempts to use her feminine wiles to attract Ottonius for him to take her to his tent. When he falls for the trap, she is thrust into his tent to await his arrival. She is nervous and excited all at once. When he enters, she is unaware that he is already on to her and is playing along to see what happens. He locates the knife she had stashed and sends her to be turned into a true slave, stripped of her freedom as easily as she is stripped of her clothing.

**My thoughts:** At first, I had a problem getting through the book because I wanted more dialogue and less history lessons. However, I understand now that the history is necessary, because it reminds the reader about a character or situation that may have happened in another book or time. This helps to center the reader, rather than leaving them trying to remember this or that character or circumstance. Regarding the story, I like Ottonius.

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