

# Conan the Usurper

*Robert E. Howard , L. Sprague de Camp , Lin Carter*

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## Conan the Usurper Details

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## From Reader Review Conan the Usurper for online ebook

### Hellblau says

This book contains four Conan tales originally written by Robert E. Howard and edited for publication by de Camp and Carter. Following are my comments on the stories.

Treasure of Tranicos - Rewritten by Howard from what was originally a pirate story set in the Americas, and it shows. The Picts are barely disguised Indians complete with tomahawks and moccasins. And instead of depicting them in the more ennobled light that was then popular in the 1930s, Howard takes us full back to the 1600s when people assumed (incorrectly) that they were mindless bloody savages. Kind of a pointless story really, the plot never resolves into anything interesting. De Camp added on an extremely corny extra two pages at the end in an attempt to tie it into his chronology. It is really unnecessary and badly written. The stories just don't need to fit that snugly together, and seeing as how the hero's identity as Conan was only an afterthought here, it's only really like a hypothetical Conan story anyway.

Wolves Beyond the Border - This story is half the length of the former and 10 times as much things happen. Overall not bad, it is a side story in the Conan saga, narrating events set into motion by Conan's battle for the Aquilonian throne against Numidides. It still sort of has the problem that the Picts and the frontier world described by Howard doesn't seem to fully belong in the Conan world but oh well, it's fantasy, you just have to suspend your disbelief.

The Phoenix on the Sword - This is the very first Conan story that Howard wrote and it is a good one. Conan is just settling into his role as king when a plot is hatched to unseat him from power. It has some political and social commentary and the beginning of the barbarism vs. civilization theme that Howard would continue develop in the Conan stories. He also noticeably uses some Lovecraftian language in describing the dark forces in the story.

The Scarlet Citadel - Another of the earliest stories and one of the best of them all. A must read! Conan is trapped by a wizard in a pitch black dungeon and has to find a way to escape.

The last two stories are two of the very best Conan stories, where the first two are really non-essential Conan tales. It makes for kind of uneven reading to have to slog though the early parts of the book to get to the rest.

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### Bret James Stewart says

*Conan the Usurper* is not a tale in itself; it is a collection of four other tales plus an introduction:

*The Treasure of Tranicos*

*The Phoenix on the Sword*

*The Scarlet Citadel*

*Wolves Beyond the Border*

I like these stories. Conan is older and wiser than in some of the earlier stuff. Also, the writing style, done by Howard and de Camp, is different than many of the other authors, who frequently portray Conan as a much more over-the-top and, therefore, less believable, at least to me, hero. The style is also more narrative,

featuring more descriptions of the areas in which Conan is travelling.

*The Treasure of Tranicos* a.k.a. *The Black Stranger* begins with Conan on the run from numerous Picts. He has to flee through a dark forest, and he is only able to shake his pursuers when he enters an area taboo to the warriors. The area in question is a cave filled with a pirate treasure and guarded by a demonic creature. And that's just the beginning. I don't want to give away the plot, but it culminates in a great combat with Conan, settlers, and pirates unsuccessfully defending a stronghold against a large group of Pictish warriors.

*The Phoenix on the Sword* is a great title and story. Conan has taken over the kingdom of Aquilonia, but he finds that his warrior's ways do not mesh well with rulership. A rebel plot to oust the barbarian is the main plot, but there is an interesting subplot wherein the Stygian sorcerer, Thoth-Amon, who is Conan's nemesis, recovers a lost ring that was responsible for much of the wizard's power. I assume this story is the reason for the title of the collection as Conan usurps the throne from the current king, Numedides.

*The Scarlet Citadel* is also set during Conan's stint as king of Aquilonia. An ally of the nation request aid, but it is a ruse. Conan and his forces are ambushed and defeated, resulting in Conan being captured. He is imprisoned in a dungeon with lots of beasties magically warped by the evil wizard of the place. One of these is the giant snake creature that I assume is the subject of the cover art. In an unusual move, Conan allies with another prisoner, a rival wizard of the aforementioned mage. The pair escape, and Conan retakes his throne.

*Wolves Beyond the Border* is another great title—can you tell I think a good title is important to drawing the interest of the reader? This story is unusual in that it actually does not feature Conan as the protagonist; indeed, Conan never appears in person though he is mentioned. The main character is Gault Hagar's son, who thwarts a Pictish attack upon Aquilonia.

As is to be expected with a Conan work, these are rousing fantasy stories. Stylistically, the tales are somewhat darker and less "Hollywood" than some of the later tales. It is a must read for fans of Conan and/or Howard, but I think pretty much any fan of sword and sorcery would like these books.

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### **Aaron White says**

I enjoyed the adventure and politics of these stories. Especially strong was *The Treasure of Tranicos*.

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### **George K. says**

Τ?ταρτη συλλογ? με ιστορ?ες του Κ?νων που διαβ?ζω και ?κτο γενικ? βιβλ?ο του μεγ?λου και αγαπημ?νου πλ?ον Ρ?μπερτ Χ?ουαρντ. Η παρο?σα συλλογ? αποτελε?ται απ? μια μικρ? νουβ?λα με τον τ?λο Ο μα?ρος ?γνωστος και δυο μεγ?λα διηγ?ματα, το Ο Φο?νικας στο σπαθ? και το Η ?λικη Ακρ?πολη.

Ας τα π?ρουμε με την σειρ?: Στον Μα?ρο ?γνωστο ο Κ?νων καλε?ται να αντιμετωπ?σει πειρατ?ς, κουρσ?ρους, ?γριους ιθαγενε?ς και ?νων δα?μονα με τερ?στια δ?ναμη, και ?λα αυτ? για ?να θησαυρ? που ε?ναι χωμ?νος μες στα βρ?χια. Η περιπ?τεια φυσικ? ε?ναι ατελε?ωτη, οι σκην?ς δρ?σης πολλ?ς, δυνατ?ς και καλ? δοσμ?νες, οι δι?λογοι μεταξ? των αντρ?ν απ?στευτοι και οι

περιγραφ?ς τρομερ?ς. Πρ?κειται για μια πολ? δυνατ? ιστορ?α που θα ικανοποι?σει τους φαν του Κ?ναν και γενικ? τους φαν της δρ?σης σε εξωτικ? τοπ?α.

Στο δι?γημα Ο Φο?νικας στο σπαθ?, ο Κ?ναν ε?ναι πλ?ον βασιλι?ς της Ακουιλον?ας και ?πως ε?ναι φυσικ? υπ?ρχουν ?νθρωποι που τον θ?λουν νεκρ?. ?νας ξακουστ?ς ποιητ?ς με μεγ?λο κοιν?, μ?σω των τραγουδι?v και των ποιημ?των του προσπαθε? να ξεσηκ?σει τον κ?σμο και ?νας παρ?νομος με μεγ?λη οικονομικ? επιφ?νεια θ?λει να π?ρει την θ?ση του. Ο Κ?ναν θα βρει επ?σης απ?ναντι του ?ναν τρομερ? μ?γο, αλλ? με μια βο?θεια απ? το πουθεν?, θα καταφ?ρει να τα βγ?λει π?ρα.

Στην τελευτα?α ιστορ?α της συλλογ?ς, στην ?λικη Ακρ?πολη, ο Κ?ναν εξακολουθε? να ε?ναι βασιλι?ς, αλλ? λ?γω μιας μεγ?λης ?ττας σε μια μ?χη, π?φτει αιχμ?λωτος των εχθρ?v του, αν?μεσα στους οπ?ους βρ?σκεται ?νας μ?γος. Ο Κ?ναν θαντιμετωπ?σει τρομερ? πλ?σματα και μαγε?α, αλλ? θα βρει μια βο?θεια στο πρ?σωπο εν?ς εξαφανισμ?νου εδ? και χρ?νια μ?γου.

Πολ? δυνατ? και ενδιαφ?ρουσα συλλογ?, σ?γουρα θ'αφ?σει ικανοποιημ?νους τους φαν του Κ?ναν του Β?ρβαρου και των σκληρ?v περιγραφ?ν του Χ?ουαρντ. Απ?κτησα την συλλογ? απ? το φετιν? παζ?ρι βιβλ?ου, ?ναντι τεσσερ?μισι ευρ?. Πολ? λ?γα για την διασκ?δαση που προσφ?ρει.

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?????? ??????? says

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**Capitalismissex says**

SO great kids should read in school.

Just awesome.

When movie?

Pelias is my seond favorite magic user in conan after agooth.

All characters could have entire novel series written about each of them, it's so awesome.

Robert e howards power to grab u and not let go on full display.

Arguably the best author ever.

Only ae van vogt and jack vance and maybe michael moorcock when he is on even compete.

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**Dido says**

The Bottom Line - should you read this book?

YES, BUT - if you're new to the Conan works it's not the ideal place to start.

The Treasure of Tranicos starts off a bit slow, but soon comes into its own, though some of the machinations of the characters are a bit too on the nose. It also doesn't resolve well, and thus works poorly as a standalone, but leads quite well into the subsequent stories.

Wolves on the Border was originally a draft Howard never quite finished. It features a protagonist other than Conan, and the writing really stands out, in no small part due to De Camp's editing and additions.

Phoenix on the Sword is a classic, and Howard at his best.

The Scarlet Citadel works better in this context than as a standalone, but a great read either way.

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### **Stuart Dean says**

"The night was as black as a witch's hate." REH doesn't offer much in plot, the stories generally following the same format, nor does he bother with character development, the evil being pure evil and the everyone else just trying to survive. But he more than makes up for the lack with imagery and scenery. Truly he is a grandmaster of prose poetry.

In four stories Conan achieves his dream. Not to give it away but it is called "Conan the Usurper" so a kingship is in the picture. Oddly, after so many stories foreshadowing the event, the actual coronation is not directly covered in any of the stories. Conan is exiled from Aquilonia then he is king of Aquilonia and that's all that is said about it. He spends time running from the Picts and finds yet another hidden treasure, and he once again demonstrates his lack of understanding of statecraft and has to beat back an invasion of his new-won kingdom. In between are two rather odd stories in that Conan is not really the main character in either one. In one Conan plays second fiddle to the story of the archwizard Thoth-amon and his righteous vengeance. The other is Conan without Conan at all. It follows a soldier on the Pictish border during the upheaval brought about by Conan's quest for the throne. It's a well written tale with savage Picts and an evil wizard and demons and Conan is talked about as a famous barbarian that no one has ever actually seen first hand. My favorite of the group.

Also, Conan meets a flight master and travels like a true member of the Horde. Zub zub!

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### **Bill Potter says**

This collection of stories is an edited version of previously released stories by Howard. L Sprague DeCamp rewrote many of the stories and edited them way down -- not necessarily a bad thing. They generally lack depth of character and are only mildly interesting for the most ardent Howard. Conan devotee. They're Conan stories so what do you expect. The Treasure of Tranicos (first released as The Black Stranger) is moderately interesting as Conan only arrives in the final third of the book - which coincidentally is when it falls apart.

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### **Gabriel Wallis says**

There's really nothing like reading a good Conan book. In "Conan the Usurper", the eighth book in the original series, there are four separate short stories, "The Treasure of Tranicos", "Wolves Beyond the Border", "The Phoenix on the Sword", and "The Scarlet Citadel". In "The Treasure of Tranicos", Conan gets caught in a small war between buccaneers, pirates, and a count concerning the treasure of Tranicos. Many

things then ensue: Conan leads all interested parties to the treasure, Thoth-Amon appears, Picts invade the small village where the count lives, a hurricane sweeps away everything and destroys the ships at sea, a war between the Picts and everyone else begins, and Conan rescues the count's daughter and her niece and takes them out to sea. The story "Wolves Beyond the Border" was completely about someone else within the Conan universe. Conan was talked about, but he was not the main character. The story was about a man on the hunt for a certain wizard. "The Phoenix on the Sword" was an excellent short story. Conan is king of Aquilonia after defeating Numedides in a civil war. Throughout the entire Aquilonian civil war, the Picts kept invading, and Thoth-Amon once again regains power through his lost (now found) serpent ring. Political uprisings concern Conan, and he eventually finds himself fighting a large monster. In "The Scarlet Citadel", Conan fights the wizard Tsotha-lanti. Overall, the entire book was very entertaining, and I absolutely loved it. Looking forward to reading the ninth book in the series, "Conan the Conqueror".

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### **Robert Day says**

The books I'd take to a desert island.  
The books I'd save from a house on fire.  
The books I read over and over.  
The best of the best.

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### **Timothy Boyd says**

Another of the heavily edited collections of Robert E. Howard's stories. I am a purist when it comes to a writer's works. I know some of these stories are no longer PC but they should be read as Howard wrote them and understood that he wrote in another period. Don't read this book unless you just can't find any others of Howard's unedited books to read. Message me if you need a list of what is good from this awesome fantasy and action writer.

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### **Michael says**

Book 8 in my re-read of the Conan series. Spoilers ahead!

#### The Treasure of Tranicos

The convoluted history of this story is detailed in L. Sprague de Camp's introduction to the book, but it's another of his revised versions of an unpublished Howard manuscript, and it's generally pretty good. It's a continuation of Conan's adventures on Aquilonian frontier fighting the Picts, which are basically Howard's version of Native American Indians. The pirate Zarano, and the Stygian wizard Thoth-Amon return, last seen in Book 6, Conan the Buccaneer, and there's a supernatural watchdog that materializes from a blue mist into a horned demon. After the climactic battle, the stage is set for the next chapter in Conan's life as he proposes to use the treasure of Tranicos to fund a revolution against the King of Aquilonia and take his place on the throne.

#### Wolves Beyond the Border

L. Sprague de Camp completed this half-finished manuscript concerning frontiersman having to contend with Picts taking advantage of the chaos generated by Conan's uprising. I enjoyed it even though Conan doesn't even appear in it except when referenced by characters discussing the events of the war, and it's how we learn that Conan has slain the king and become ruler of Aquilonia. I might be mistaken, but this seems like the first story where it's revealed how well known Conan's exploits have become.

### The Phoenix on the Sword

As the story opens, Conan is already king and wondering if he's cut out to rule since he never actually envisioned anything beyond taking the throne and realizes what a bureaucratic nightmare it is. Numerous schemes are in motion to overthrow him, and Thoth-Amon resurfaces, but only now he's a slave to Ascalante, the chief architect plotting Conan's downfall. Events culminate with an assassination attempt that nearly exceeds if not for the demonic monkey wrench thrown into the works by Thoth-Amon who gets his mojo back.

### The Scarlet Citadel

Although the previous plot failed, a trap set by two neighboring kingdoms secretly backed by a wizard named Tsotha-lanti proves more successful and five thousand of Conan's finest knights are massacred and Conan is taken away in chains. He's locked away in the Halls of Horror, subterranean passages beneath the city of Koth filled with monstrosities created by Tsotha-lanti through surgery and black magic. Out of all of the Conan stories I've read so far, this sequence is one of my favorites in regards to just how incredibly creepy it is. Obviously, Conan's story doesn't end there, so once liberated, he assembles what troops he can and rides to the rescue of his kingdom. What follows is the second standout sequence, six pages of carnage, strategy, and rivers of blood as Conan's outnumbered forces clash with his enemies. Conan crushes his opponents, but only five hundred of the nineteen hundred knights that rode with him survive. It's the most grueling battle since the one in Black Colossus from Book 3, Conan the Freebooter.

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### **Angel says**

Otra recopilación de relatos, en este caso cuenta historias de un Conan de alrededor de 40 años justo antes y después del asalto al trono de Aquilonia, también con una historia en la que no aparece Conan, en la frontera con los pictos, no hay historia sobre la guerra en sí, pero se llega al momento culmen del personaje acabando con un Conan rey.

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### **Ron says**

Hard to beat the original Conan. The character never dies... Conan is forever.

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