

Darien Connors

AND THE NECROMANCY OF ERIDU



JASON DAWSON

Darien Connors and the Necromancy of Eridu

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Published by DLT Atlantis Publishing at Smashwords

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This is the first book of the Darien Connors series. For more information on the series, visit <http://www.darienconnors.com>

Jason Dawson has written other works under the name JC De La Torre. For more information on the author, visit <http://www.authorjasondawson.com>



*To my beautiful wife, Rita, and all other fans of the fabulous
J.K. Rowling*

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my wife Rita, for putting up with my nonsense for so many moons. She's always been my rock and now that we are entering our second decade together I love her as much as the first day we married.

I'd like to thank my mother, Irene, the De La Torre, Cabrera, and Dawson families who have been so supportive of my efforts.

I'd like to thank J.K. Rowling, whose world of magic and wizardry is an inspiration to us all.

In addition, I'd like to thank Jo's army, the Potterheads, who have kicked the tires on this new tale of a boy wizard.

I'd also like to thank the fans of JC De La Torre (my alter ego) – who continue to be my defenders of the realm. I love you all.

Finally, I'd most of all to thank you – my reader. Without you, the story of Darien is never told. Without you no one will ever know of Kishpu and Necromancers of Eridu.

Without you – I am nothing.

A Word to the Fans of the Other Boy Wizard

I know exactly what you're thinking. *Wonderful, another Harry Potter rip-off.* Indeed, I can completely understand the sentiment. Lord knows, there's plenty of them out there. When there's something as profitable and powerful as the story of the boy who lived, there's bound to be those who want to crash the party.

I make no apologies for gearing my marketing efforts to attract you. You are, after all, my demographic – those who love stories about magic and fantasy in young adult fiction.

If you're like me, you're dying for a continuation of the Potterverse, one that is a little more substantial than Jo's online paradise of Pottermore. You're looking for new stories for your magical needs, to live in the world of Harry, Hermione, and Ron for just a bit longer. To fear ole what's his face for another go around.

We know that's not going to happen right now – perhaps ever. Lord knows, Jo has more than enough money, right? Other than her love for writing and for the subject matter there's really no reason for her to write another Potter novel.

No one can replace that void we all feel without Harry.

However, one thing as an author that I can do is create my own world. One that has some of the elements that made Jo's work so amazing, yet still belongs to me. A story that will continue on and on as long as I'm capable of writing it and you're still interested in reading it.

I won't kid you. Jo Rowling is a big inspiration for this series. Not because of the money she's made but the world

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she created. Her ability to make the characters real, her worlds with depth and the events comical, yet routinely frightening.

I don't deny that in this story you'll see elements of Harry, Ron, Hermione and He Who Must Not Be Named. Make no mistake though, Darien is not Harry. He is a vastly different character with a different upbringing. The only things they may have in common are that they were orphaned at a young age, have an important destiny and possess magical powers they didn't know they had.

While Harry's story was an inspiration – this is not a continuation or a copy of that tale. In this story, our hero is whisked away to a different planet – a world where magic and science fiction rolled into one. His friends are weird aliens with special powers and the villain is someone from his own family.

I also want to admit to you here and now, I'm not J.K. Rowling. My style is different than hers as I like to get to the point of the matter a lot more quickly. I won't be spending pages describing the eating habits of my characters or what the leaves of a tree look like. I leave that to your own imagination and interpretation.

I don't have Jo's skills – but to be honest few do. I'm just a guy who enjoys creating fascinating, thrilling stories for his readers. Some of you may love this one, others may hate it because it's not Jo. I accept that.

In the end I just thank you for giving Darien Connors a chance to at least have a seat at the table of your reading pleasure. If you do like Darien, I'd hope you'd let other Potterheads know about him. One of the great things about these 99 Center novelettes is that you'll have another Darien tale in the next 60 days – these are truly a serial of books.

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Unlike Harry's story, as long as you have interest and love Darien, you will continue to see him. It will never end (as long as I'm still capable of writing the stories of course). I can't guarantee you the depth and amazing wonder that Jo provided you in this first novelette. But I will promise you as these stories continue, you'll learn more about these characters, the worlds they visit, the creatures they encounter, how they do their amazing feats of magic and the purpose of Darien.

I hope you will enjoy reading this story as much as I enjoyed writing it. I know it will never fill that hole you have right now, but maybe...just maybe, it will divert your attention for just a little while.

Jason Dawson
Author of the Darien Connors Series
August 6th, 2011

Previous Installment

None, this is the first of the series.

The Necromancy of Eridu

Darien Connors was a normal boy who didn't seem very important to the world. He wasn't tall, didn't have large muscles and he wasn't particularly fast. He was an average student who often daydreamed during class and had taken summer school twice. He wasn't a bad kid (as he never got into serious trouble) but he was a bit of a loner.

Darien struggled at making friends. While his features were handsome enough, his smaller physique resulted in him being ignored by the girls of Cocoa Beach High. He didn't fit in with the Goths, Emos or Preppies. He wasn't a nerd or a jock. He certainly wasn't into skating or being a "stoner". He had blond wavy hair, dark grey eyes and didn't know any foreign languages, so he certainly didn't fall in with the minority groups. As a freshman, he really didn't know many of his classmates.

As much as he wished he could fit in, Darien never felt he was where he should be.

He would pass the days going through the motions of getting up for school, going to class, have lunch by himself in the cafeteria, then more class and finally home where Aunt Misty would have dinner ready. He'd do his homework, and then get an hour watching television or playing video games before going to bed. It was the same thing every day, except weekends, of course. Those were spent with Uncle Mike, repairing something on the house or the family Volkswagen.

"Darien! It's time to get up for school, honey!" he heard Aunt Misty call up to his room.

He rose as he did so many times before, shedding his Spider-man pj's and pulling on his favorite black jeans. A simple white t-shirt and red sneakers would be his only additions to the ensemble.

"Coming Aunt Misty!" Darien shouted back, knowing scrambled eggs, bacon and orange juice awaited his arrival at the table.

He raced down the stairs of their quaint little house to the waiting chair, hearing it screech as it crossed the tile floor. Uncle Mike briefly looked up from the Sports page and he nodded to Darien.

"Tampa Bay beat the Yankees again," he mumbled, "They're up a game and half now."

Darien feigned disappointment. He really didn't care much for baseball or any sports, really but he knew Uncle Mike was just trying to establish some common ground with him by sharing his love of the Yanks. After all, it had to be mighty difficult for him after what happened.

The truth was Uncle Mike and Aunt Misty weren't really his relatives. They were close friends of Darien's famed father, Douglas Connors, working with him at Kennedy Space Center.

For a while, all Darien and his father had were each other. Darien's mother died when he was very young, so young he barely remembered her face. He and his father moved throughout the United States, never staying long at any particular place.

When he was accepted to NASA as an astronaut, Douglas moved them permanently to Cocoa Beach, Florida. Cocoa was one of those big little towns - the kind that wasn't a thriving metropolis but certainly had more than one stoplight.

As the years went on and his father prepared for a journey into space, Mike and Misty came into their lives. They were a kind couple, loving of each other and they had always treated Darien like their own. Since they couldn't have children, Darien was their surrogate. If Douglas worked late into the night, Darien would spend the night with Mike and Misty. They always had games for him to play and movies to watch. It was always a fun time.

On Darien's tenth birthday, Douglas received his first mission and it was a big one. He would be the first man to step foot on another planet - Mars. With all the pomp and circumstance of the announcement, Darien spent his birthday with Uncle Mike and Aunt Misty. He was in bed by the time his father had gotten home.

Darien heard his father arrive at the residence and the commotion of congratulations and well done's. Some of his dad's friends came with him to the house and they celebrated into the early morning hours. Darien waited and waited for his father to come up but it seemed he had been forgotten.

Finally, Douglas Connors burst into the room startling the youngster a bit.

"Did you hear, boy?" He boasted, "Your old man is going back to space!"

"Back?" Darien looked puzzled, "When did you go the first time?"

"Oh that's a long story, I'll tell you some time."

"You forgot my birthday." Darien said sadly.

"Oh, did I?" his father smiled and then revealed a model of a rocket from behind his back.

"Wow!" Darien exclaimed as his hand snatched it from his father's hands.

"That is the Zeus 8, the rocket that's going to take your old man to Mars!"

Darien slid his hand along the cylinder-shaped space ship, observing every detail. Black meshed with whites and the bright United States of America sticker seemed to sparkle on the plastic.

"Dad, this is tope!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"Is that good?" Douglas chuckled.

"Yeah Dad, its good."

"Well alrighty then, kiddo, let's put your 'tope' rocket over here in the bag and get you home."

"Darien, you alright, son?" Uncle Mike asked.

"Yeah," Darien replied, "Just thinking about my dad."

"Oh." Uncle Mike frowned.

It took two years of training and tests before the launch was finally scheduled. As you could imagine, the American press was in an uproar over the U.S. government spending millions of dollars on a trip to Mars during one of the worst economic downturns in American history. Darien's father would come home frustrated and tired, calling the reporters "Commies".

Still the project pressed on and Douglas found himself away from Darien more often. Mike and Misty would always be there and glad to take care of the boy. It was almost as if they were his parents and Douglas was the uncle who visited.

Finally the day came for the launch and Douglas had procured a special spot for Darien in the family observation area. Douglas entered the room in his orange NASA jump suit and weaved through a sea of well-wishers. As he stroked his hand through his stringy short hair, he looked down on his son and smiled.

"It won't be that long, son." He said.

"Nearly two years," Darien replied.

"Maybe not even that long. This bird is the fastest man's ever created. She'll have me back here in no time."

"Dad, I don't want you to go."

"I know, son," Douglas smiled, "But it's a little late in the game to skin out now. We'll see each other before you know it."

"What if something happens to you?"

Douglas frowned and then wrapped his arms around his son.

"Boy, don't you worry about that," he consoled as Darien began to cry, "I'll be back here before you can spit. I promise we'll see each other again."

"You promise?"

"You bet I do. Now can I get a little kiss for good luck?"

Darien kissed his father on the cheek.

"I love you, boy."

"Darien, get a move on! That bus will be leaving any minute now!" Aunt Misty handed Darien his lunch bag and backpack while rushing him out the front door.

He raced down the street to the bus stop. The long yellow bus was already there but the driver caught a glimpse of Darien and waited for him.

As Darien flew up the steps he could feel the eyes of the other students on him and heard a few giggles.

"There's Astroboy spazzing out again," he heard Tommy Saldin whisper to a classmate.

"Hey Astroboy," said Bobby Killinger, "Do you know what NASA stands for?"

More giggles.

"Need Another Stupid Astronaut!" The large boy finished and the kids around burst into hysterics.

Darien slumped into an empty seat and ignored the others. It was like this every day, after all. Nothing new to see here.

The day was like any other for Darien. As he zombie'd through the motions he felt a sadness come over him. With his father gone, he had been spinning with no direction, no will to do anything. He had to move on.

Darien stepped into Mr. Hanson's Science class and took a seat in the back. He liked sitting back there. He wouldn't get called on a lot and more importantly, it gave him a good view of Gemma Gutierrez. She stirred feelings in him he hadn't really experienced before. When she walked in, her shoulder length brown hair seemed to sashay around her head, bouncing and twirling curls that hugged her face perfectly. She had doe-like brown eyes, tanned skin, and a small mole just above her perfectly formed lips.

Every time Darien gazed on her, he felt his heart race, his stomach churn and he'd lose his breath.

As she took her normal seat in the second row, she looked over her shoulder at Darien, who quickly turned his gaze to a book case and a goth girl that sat near him. The Goth girl gazed back and gave him a "what's your problem?" look to which Darien answered by staring down at the tile floor.

When he grew the courage to look back at Gemma he was surprised to see her still staring at him. She smiled and winked, then looked forward as Hanson began drudging on about star matter or something of the like.

He felt his heart pumping like a piston revved up to a hundred miles per hour. Perspiration dab his brow and he buried his eyes to the beaten up desk he was sitting upon. As Gemma captivated him, his gaze prevented him from seeing Tristan Campbell, senior and captain of the Cocoa Beach High football team, clinching his fist and grinding his jaw at her actions.

Gemma and Tristan were an item, *were* being the operative word. As he struggled in classes and was forced to take a Freshman level Science class to remain on the football team and graduate, it was Gemma who had offered to help Tristan through the semester. It didn't take long for sparks to fly between them. Unfortunately, they were from different worlds. Gemma was an A-plus student, Tristan was the epitome of a dumb jock. It quickly fizzled and Gemma ended it. That never sat well with Tristan – dumped by a Freshman nerd – even a good looking one – isn't what's supposed to happen to the captain of the football team.

So as Gemma smiled and winked at the puny AstroBoy, jealousy shot through Tristan like a lightning bolt. He had pushed the kid around multiple times but Connors was never much of a threat. Now the Neek was moving in on his girl. Something had to be done.

The bell rang for the end of class and as Darien made his way out of the class, Gemma waited for him by the door.

"Hi Darien," she smiled.

"Hi." He managed to gasp out.

“So I know you’re kind of shy and all so I thought I’d ask you if you’d help me with my Science homework after school. I’m really confused by this singularity stuff.”

Her eyes seemed to glisten like crystal.

“Yeah...uh, sure, if you want,” Darien tried to sound calm. “Meet me at the front of the school after the last period and we’ll go somewhere.”

Suddenly a great force struck him from behind, knocking him to the floor.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing, AstroNeek?” Tristan’s angry voice came from above him.

“Tristan, don’t!” He heard Gemma plead.

“You couldn’t possibly be stupid enough to be making a move on my girl, could you?” Tristan continued.

“Tristan, we’re just friends.”

She said we’re friends, the thought raced through Darien’s mind – the pros and cons of such a statement quickly calculating.

“I saw the way you were looking at him – I know that look!” Tristan screamed.

“And what if I did?” Gemma barked back, “We’re through. History. You need to let it go before you make a fool out of yourself.”

“Too late.” The words just escaped from Darien’s lips...he barely even realized he said them.

He looked up to see the enraged, contorted and red face of Tristan. Tristan grabbed Darien by the shirt with his left hand and drew his right arm backward, fist clinched. Just as he was about to unleash his punishing blow, his arm was grabbed by Mr. Hanson.

“Campbell, you are barely keeping your eligibility as it is.” Hanson said, “Strike this boy and not only will you not be on the football team, I’ll make it so you’re expelled.”

“Fine, fine! Get off me!” Tristan shouted as he let go of Darien’s shirt and shoved Mr. Hanson to force a release of his grip.

“This isn’t over, Astroboy.” He growled as he stormed off.

“I’m so sorry about that,” Gemma said as she helped Darien to his feet, “I don’t know how I ever let myself get involved with that meathead.”

“You okay, Connors?” Hanson interjected.

“Yeah, fine, thank you, sir,” Darien replied, “And you, too, Gemma.”

“I can’t believe he did that, he’s such an –”

“I’m okay, Gemma, don’t worry about it.” Darien insisted.

“Okay, well, are we still on for our date after school?”

“Date?”

“Yeah, our study date?” She smiled as she handed him a book that had escaped his back pack.

“Sure.” The adrenalin began surging through his veins.

“Catch ya later!” He watched as she moved on to her next class, never breaking his glance as questions raced through his mind. *Gemma called it a date! What does that mean? Should I try to kiss her? What if I’m completely misreading her signals?*

As the bell rang signaling the end of the school day, Darien quickly collected his belongings and rushed out of the classroom. In seconds, he found himself in front of the school, the designated spot where he and Gemma would meet up for their study date. Yet, there was no sign of her anywhere.

As the last few kids continued to exit the building, the clouds, grey and ominous began to build in the distance. Darien had already missed his bus home and the front doors of the school were locked for the night. He wasn’t looking forward to the walk home. Then, the sound of a twig snapping around the corner caught his attention.

Darien, who had been sitting on the steps, quickly rose to his feet and began to peek around the corner.

"Gemma?"

"Sorry, AstroNeek, she won't be meeting you for your little date." The familiar voice of Tristan Campbell returned.

"Tristan...what did you do to her?"

"Do to her?" Tristan emerged from the corner with two beefy offensive linemen as wingmen, "I didn't have to do anything to her but talk sense. She knows that to be seen with you is social suicide."

Darien turned to run but slammed into two other football players who had snuck up behind him. He struggled as their large hands clamped down on his scrawny arms.

"Let – let me go!" Darien pleaded.

"Oh, don't worry Connors, we're not going to hurt you." Tristan continued.

Tristan nodded and the two goons dragged Darien toward the courtyard, his books falling throughout their path as his book bag ripped open while he struggled against them.

"In fact," Tristan sneered, "We're going to do you a big favor and get you closer to dear ole daddy."

"No, let me go!" Darien screamed as he felt the goons lift his hands above him and tying them together with rayon cord. He felt the steel flag pole where the school flew the American flag next to him and quickly realized what was happening.

"Please, please don't do this." He pleaded again.

"Don't worry Connors, someone will be around to get you down by the morning," Tristan smirked, "Oh wait, it's Friday. I guess not. Well, good luck there, Astrofreak. Say hello to Daddy for me."

"Tristan, I don't think we should do this, he could get hurt," one of the offensive linemen said.

"Shut up, Mongo. Just do what I tell you." Tristan ordered.

"Don't...no..." Darien whimpered.

"Gentlemen, it's time we show Mr. Connors what happens when you mettle where you don't belong," Tristan commanded, "Hoist the colors!"

"Fly Astroboy, Fly!" One of the offensive linemen barked.

Pain began to shoot down Darien's outstretched arms as he felt the weight of his body and gravity pulling on his wrists. As he glanced down he saw Tristan and his teammates growing smaller and smaller. Darien cried out in pain.

Suddenly, his rise ended, dangling from nearly the top of the school flagpole. Darien felt himself slipping into darkness.

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