

The Chronicles of Invernevis

by

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This cycle of five novels follows the fortunes of a family of Highland aristocrats, the Macdonalds of Invernevis, from pre 1900 to 2000.

First Chronicle

Cruel in the Shadow

(Collins, London, 1979; St Martin's Press, New York, 1980.
New edition in preparation.)

The saga commences with Niall Macdonald, the heir to Invernevis, being photographed on the steps of the family mansion before taking his company of Argyll & Sutherland territorial soldiers out to fight in the Boer War. His retarded sister Laura is heartbroken to see him depart, since she is left in the care of the heartless Aunt Carlotta. His father cannot see Niall off, because he is dying in his upstairs bedroom of a disease contracted from Indian women while serving in that country. The novel details the lifestyles of servants and employees in a Highland mansion at the close of the Victorian era, introducing the character of Maggie, the young kitchen-maid, who will appear in all five novels. *Cruel in the Shadow* also gives a vivid account of the ruthless fighting in the Boer War.

Second Chronicle

The Blind Bend

(Collins, London, 1981; St Martin's Press, New York, 1981. New edition in preparation.)

The narrative resumes in 1904. Niall Macdonald, Boer War veteran and now 17th Laird of Invernevis, is bringing back his bride, Mary Rose, to his ancestral home in the Highlands. But as the horse-drawn gig approaches the blind bend on the avenue, Mary Rose is filled with foreboding. The house she has become mistress of is an unhappy one. Her mother-in-law is an alcoholic and her brother-in-law Alexander a rebel against his own class, preferring to sit in ploughman's clothes in the local pub, than at the big house table with his blueblooded family. In this dysfunctional household, Maggie the kitchen-maid is a staunch presence in the face of tragedy.

Third Chronicle

Empty Footsteps

*(Black Ace Books, 1996. A revised, expanded and definitive edition of this third novel is complete and will be forthcoming under the new title **The Waterloo Woods in Retreat.**)*

It is now 1914, with the Invernevis contingent of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders going off to war. The Laird, Niall, does not go with them, due to the severity of his wounds received in the Boer War. The central character of this novel is Dochie MacDougall: crofter, soldier, a big man full of Gaelic song and charisma, a lover of life whom women find irresistible – notably Alanna Richardson, the suffragette sympathizer who defies the conventions of her class. The gentle Maggie Macdonald, now housekeeper, becomes pregnant, but is the father one of the servants? Or could it be the Laird? This novel, partly set in the Somme and Flanders, portrays the terrible suffering of the

troops, and considers the mysterious death of John Lauder, Sir Harry Lauder's soldier son. Despite the sombre theme of war, *Empty Footsteps* is also a novel of light and laughter, drawing on the treasures of Gaelic magic realism.

Fourth Chronicle

The Broken Lyre

(Black Ace Books, 2008. See Latest Titles.)

Fifth Chronicle

The House of Glass

(Forthcoming from Black Ace Books.)

The Macdonalds of Invernevis have come a long way from the steps of their mansion house in 1899. The novel opens at a Coco Chanel fashion show in Paris, where Madeleine, the daughter of Amélie, Niall Macdonald's WW2 lover, is determined to uncover the circumstances of her mother's death. An illegitimate daughter of Niall's sister (who disappeared with her lover on the Star Tiger aircraft in the 'Bermuda Triangle' in 1948) appears to claim her inheritance. A gifted artist, young Deirdre all too readily embraces the pop music and drug culture of the 1960s and becomes involved with Andy Warhol in New York. As heir to her bachelor uncle, Niall, Deirdre finds her development as an artist a painful experience – especially as she is confused about her sexuality. Is she doomed to end up just one more casualty of drink and misfortune, like so many Macdonalds before her?

Or will she, the first-ever female Laird of Invernevis, win through to achieve stability, successful creativity and personal fulfilment?