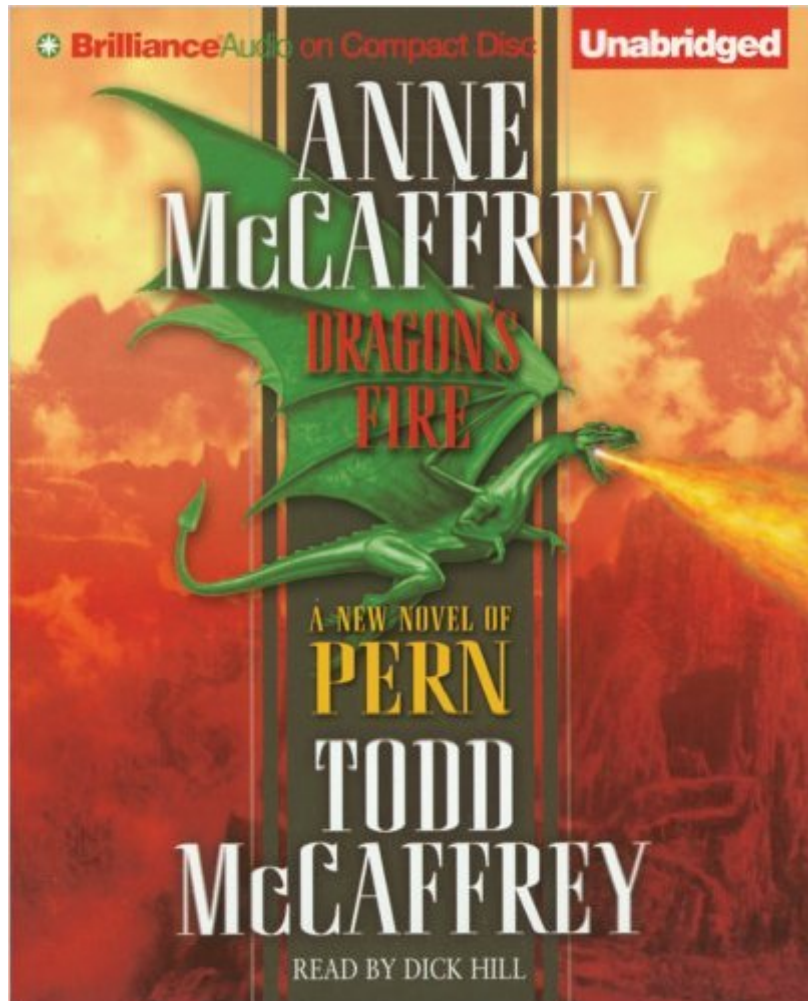


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Dragon's Fire (Dragonriders Of Pern Series)



Synopsis

Pellar is an orphan taken in by Masterharper Zist. Though born mute, Pellar is a gifted tracker, and when Zist sets off to take over as harper for Natalon's coal-mining camp, Pellar - along with his fire-lizard, Chitter - joins him on a secret mission of his own: to find out if reported thefts of coal are the work of the Shunned, criminals condemned to a life of wandering and hardship. Halla is one of the children of the Shunned. Though innocent of their parents' crimes, these children have inherited their cruel punishment. Lack of food, shelter, and clothes is their lot; hope is unknown to them. And what future would they hope for? Without a hold to call their own, there will be no protection for them when the lethal Thread inevitably falls again. Life is particularly tough for Halla. Her family gone, she must fend for herself. Yet despite the brutality of her surroundings, Halla is kind and gentle, devoted to those more helpless than she. As depraved as Halla is good, Tenim is in league with Tarik, a crooked miner from Camp Natalon, who helps him steal coal in exchange for a cut of the profit. But Tenim soon realizes there is a lot more to be made from firestone, the volatile mineral that enables the dragons of Pern to burn Thread out of the sky. Tenim doesn't care what he has to do, or whom he has to kill, in order to corner the market. Cristov is Tarik's son. Dishonored by his father's greed and treachery, the boy feels he must make amends, even if it means risking his life by mining the volatile firestone, which detonates on contact with the slightest drop of moisture. When the last remaining firestone mine explodes in flames, a desperate race begins to find a new deposit of the deadly but essential mineral, for without it there can be no defense against Thread. But Tenim has a murderous plan to turn tragedy to his own advantage, and only Pellar, Halla, and Cristov can stop him - and ensure that there will be a future for all on the world of the Dragonriders.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Anne McCaffrey and her son Todd McCaffrey have collaborated a second time to write a novel of Pern's earlier days. *Dragon's Fire* takes place during the same time period as their first collaboration *Dragon's Kin*, which would be the end of the Second Interval after Landing (the settlement of Pern) before the Fall of Thread. This novel has to do with discovering new sources for firestone, the material needed by the dragons to breathe fire. Pellar, a young mute boy is apprenticed to Masterharper Zist and they work together to search for Moran, another Harper who has gone missing trying to help The Shunned. The Shunned are a segment of Pernese society which have been outcast for various crimes but also at the whim of a Lord Holder. Pellar's story intertwines with Halla, a homeless girl, and Cristov, the son of a miner. There are references to the characters of *Dragon's Kin*, but this serves more to place the story in a time period rather than illuminate the story here. While *Dragon's Fire* is, at its core, about finding a safe way to mine firestone, most of the novel focuses on the various adventures of Pellar as well as Tenim's (a villain) desire to gain power and money. *Dragon's Fire* does not seem to tell the story it claims to tell, and the issue with firestone is almost an afterthought except for discussions on the challenges of mining firestone because of how volatile the material is. Midway through the novel the story picks up and the McCaffreys start driving towards a conclusion, but the first half of the novel meanders around without accomplishing much. By the end *Dragon's Fire* is a better novel than *Dragon's Kin*, but it does not hold up nearly as well against Anne's classic *Dragonriders of Pern* novels.

As I've said before, my theory on lengthy series is they tend to be divided into several tiers of quality: great ones (usually early on), good ones that don't match the passion or excitement of the top ones, adequate ones that serviceably move the grand story along but aren't particularly original or well-written, and the bad ones that were just spit out because series fans would buy them. *Dragon's Fire* unfortunately is in the last category and it might even be a step below if that were possible. What places books in the lower tiers of such series are that they aren't as emotionally rewarding or their characters aren't as well-developed or they're just a bit too predictable. But what places *Dragon's Fire* so low is not only are all of those true, but the basic writing elements

themselves, which are usually at least handled in workmanlike fashion in the adequate novels, are here an utter and complete mess. Basic settings are seldom made clear and characters wander all over the map without any sense of place or space or context. Motivations of several characters are not made clear or are simply stated without any sense of history behind them. Some don't even make much sense. Shifts in place and time are often abrupt. Multiple plot lines are scattered about like spilled rocks on the floor and the reader lands on them with no sense of a greater pattern, no sense of transitions or story arc or development. Plot points and characters are dropped completely with little rhyme or reason, as if the book had been written by a committee whose members never bothered to read the others' work. Even the language is poorly constructed (not intentionally for effect or character development).

Dragon's Fire (2006) is the second SF novel in this subseries of the Dragonriders of Pern, following Dragon's Kin. In the previous volume, at Camp Natalon, Kindan trained Natalon's blind daughter Nuella to direct his green watch-wher Kisk. After a cave-in in the mine, Kindan taught her to take Kisk between to the trapped miners and then to bring them back with her. During the rescue, the watch-wher rebonded to Nuella and changed her name to Nuelsk. Kindan was not very surprised about losing the watch-wher, for Nuella and Nuelsk made an ideal pair. Besides, he had been asked to tryout at Harper Hall. In this novel, the Shunned are outcasts from normal society. Many have done evil deeds and so their Holders have Shunned them. But many more among the outcasts are the spouses and children of the Shunned. While innocent of any wrongdoing themselves, they go with their relatives into exile. The Harper leaders are concerned about the Shunned. The thread will be coming soon and the Shunned will be without shelter. Earlier, they had sent out Journeyman Moran to contact the Shunned, but have not heard anything back from him. Pellar is the adopted child of Master Zist and Cayla. They are Harpers and he is also a Harper in the eyes of everyone except himself. Pellar excels at instrument making and other Harper skills. He is a graphic artist and can directly contact the mind of dragons. He even has a bronze fire-lizard, Chitter. Yet he is mute and thus cannot sing. Zist, Cayla and their young daughter Carissa leave Pellar behind when they venture into the wilds to contact the Shunned.

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