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Anne McCaffrey , Todd McCaffrey

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Bringing fresh wonders and dangers to light in the skies of Pern, Anne McCaffrey and her son, Todd, who demonstrated his writing talents in the bestselling novels *Dragon's Kin* and *Dragonsblood*, return with their second collaboration: a thrilling adventure of discovery and fate.

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 even tougher 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 must make amends somehow, 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.

Dragon's Fire Details

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From Reader Review Dragon's Fire for online ebook

Jo Rhett says

Can I give this book 0 stars? It rambles from place to place like something undead. Characters move and interact, but there's no point in the interaction because nobody grows. There is sex but no desire, there are personalities but they don't come into play. After 3 hours of listening I found myself banging my head against the window praying something would happen that I could care about.

Note that I loved Anne McCaffrey's Dragonriders books. But this book was written by Todd, and he's not Anne by any stretch.

Angela says

Love this series of books. It's one of my all time favourites. I decided to re-read the entire Dragonriders of Pern series and over the past couple of months, I have been working my way through them all. Anne McCaffrey has such a wonderful, boundless imagination and such a vivid and descriptive style, her stories transport the reader into the fantastic world that she created and sweeps you up on the breathtaking adventures. Spellbinding!

Tara says

Ok, so I know it's frowned upon to write a review on a book that you didn't actually read the whole way through, but I honestly did try.

I'm a big Anne McCaffrey fan, the Pern series being my favourite of hers. But unfortunately, writing doesn't seem to be a skill that was passed from Mother to Son, because Todd McCaffrey is not all that great.

The characters were dull and uninteresting, their motivations were often confusing or just plain stupid, the story rambled and by the time I'd reached about the half-way mark (which is where I gave up), I was still unsure as to what the actual point of the story was.

Also, it seems quite removed from the Pern of other books. For one thing, loosing a dragon is supposed to be a tragic event (see Brekke in Dragonquest and Lytol in Dragonflight) and yet here one character acts completely normal save for the occasional 'painful' pause when something blatantly reminds him of his loss.

These issues wouldn't have been quite so offputting were it not for the writing style - I can put up with plenty of deficiencies in plot and characterisation if the book is written in a pleasing style (Memoirs of a Geisha is a good example. No real depth but very pretty and an enjoyable escapism read). But the writing in this book was the main thing that made me put it down in the first place. There's little descriptive text, nothing to draw the reader in.

For fans of the Pern series, this *might* be worth a read simply to continue the saga, but if you're anything like me you'll probably be disgusted at the poor quality. My advise would be to borrow, not buy.

Kathy Martin says

Pern is going through some growing pains 490 years After Landing. The common punishment for lawbreaking is Shunning of the lawbreaker and his or her family leaving roving bands of lawbreakers wandering Pern. In many cases, this means roving bands of children who have committed no crime but who are in danger of starvation.

It is also a time when mining for the firestone that the dragons need when Thread falls is at a low point. Any contact with water means the firestone explodes. When the story begins there is only one working mine.

There are quite a few viewpoint characters. All of them are quite young and are all about 10 to 12 when the story begins. Pellar is a mute orphan taken in by Harpers and trained to gather information. He is a gifted tracker and has great survival skills. Halla is a child of the Shunned is busy caring for other young orphans. Cristov is a young miner whose father has been Shunned because he was stealing from the mine for his own profit. His father's thefts and corner-cutting caused the deaths of a number of miners. Cristov is determined to make up for his father's crimes. We also see Kindan again though his role in this story is relatively minor.

This story, along with many of the rest co-authored by Todd McCaffrey, takes place around the time of the Third Pass. The characters know that Threadfall is coming but it is still a number of years away.

The main villain of this story is Tenim who was also the child of Shunned parents and who is living up to their evil. He is a thief and murderer. His major plot in this story is to gain great wealth by cornering the market on firestone. He is willing to destroy mines and kill miners to further his plans.

I enjoyed the way the various plot threads were woven together in this one. I liked that a better solution for the Shunned was finally found because it never seemed fair to me that children should be punished for crimes their parents committed. I liked that all the Weyrleaders were not the same though I do wonder how D'gan of Telgar managed to impress his dragon. D'gan makes a fine secondary villain in this story because of his mistreatment of the Shunned and his single-minded pursuit of firestone no matter what it cost in lives.

This was another great entry into the long-running Pern series. In the internal chronology of the series this is probably book five. Published in 2006, it appears 38 years after the first published Pern book.

Maree says

I have to say that Pellar is definitely unusual for a harper, but I loved him all the more for it. It's always fun to see other characters popping up from earlier in the series, and Master Zist is one of my favorites. Grumpy old man with a heart of gold! But Pellar is amazing as well, and I love his abilities and how he never gives up, despite his inability to speak.

This book is definitely a lot darker than some of the others in this series, and I did enjoy it for that. It talked about the Shunned, those who have been expelled from Holds for various crimes and live as best they can without the protection of the Holds. But with Thread coming soon, what will these desperates do to keep

themselves alive? Overwhelm a Hold? Worse?

It was interesting to see another way of dealing with crime and the problems it holds as well. I appreciate the social commentary, even on an alien world with dragons.

Kristin says

Someone needs to sit Todd down and explain the virtues of continuity to him.

Jan says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book of Anne McCaffrey and her son. They work well as a team. I had read all of her Dragons of Pern series when I was young so this was a revisit to the world of Dragons and thread falling. I have encouraged each of my grandchildren to read this book and the world she has created.

Marita says

It has been so long since I read McCaffrey that it was so much fun to "visit Pern" again. The character development was not quite what it used to be, I think Todd is more into adventure than inner feelings that motivate people, but all in all I liked it a lot.

Foomy says

Todd is really grasping to find problems for Pern to deal with that don't involve some form of lord holder misbehavior. This time it's firestone that explodes when it touches any amount of water (sweat included, yet the moisture in dragons' mouths doesn't make it erupt somehow). So they have to solve this problem somehow. That seems like a stretch to me, but I'm not prepared to reject this book on that reason alone.

The worse problem in my opinion is that none of the characters in this book seem to have any reason for the things they do or feel. Why does the main male lead take a liking to the girl he does, for instance? He has a fine speech about it at the end of the book but the words are coming from a place that doesn't exist on this plane of reality.

This is where I decided to stop reading novels of Pern, and from what I've seen on the shelves I'm not regretting it. The chief problem in the next two novels I saw was a plague. We had a plague in the last novel. That's three plagues in 4 books. Come on.

Cass says

Todd McCaffrey did okay with his first novel Dragon's Kin, but this offering is the beginning of a

disappointing journey.

Dragon's Fire has some good qualities thought I suspect not ones that the author intended. I actually enjoyed reading about Master Zist. The character portrayal was at such odds with other characters previously associated with Harperhall (which are usually either the epitome of wisdom and purity or grumpy old professors). Master Zist is the first character in all of the Pern novels to have serious flaws, however I must reiterate that I don't actually believe the author had this in mind.

Master Zist is a bitter and slightly insane man set on solving the problem of the Shunned (exiled people with big blue 'S' tattooed onto their foreheads). He first sends an apprentice, Moran, (presumably barely more than a child) to go find them. Moran becomes what he set out to find. A thief happy to sway and be swayed by a sexual mother and daughter all while trying to care for a band of children. His reasoning for not taking the children to the nearest hold or Harper only serves to show how truly lost the young man was.

Zist then attempts to find the Shunned himself. The sad result of this is his wife and baby die while trying to cure a fever amongst the Shunned. Zist is left with only his mute foster son who he finally agrees to apprentice. Zist is shipped off to a remote mining hold (Camp Natalon from Dragon's Kin) and thus begins an attempt to add Pellar as a main character in a previously written story. This is achieved by having the twelve year old boy camp by himself in the forest and being rarely allowed to visit Zist (and in doing so have a good meal and a comfy bed). Zist displays no paternal care, hunting Pellar out the hut in the middle of the night, flaunting his new apprentice and talking about gatherings in which Pellar cannot attend.

I find his character to have many layers and his lack of care for his apprentices, his stupidity in sending boys out alone was a refreshing change from such perfect and wise Harperhall residents as Menolly, Sebell and Robington.

This is the first book in which it becomes obvious that the author has a thing for prepubescent and barely adult main characters. It worked in his first novel Dragons Kin but in this book it becomes difficult to relate to an eight year old girl galavanting around the forest chasing trails and surviving on her own, let alone being encouraged to do such by her new Lord Holder (*spoiler* At one stage the girl seeks refuge in a hold, she is willing accepted but quickly sent back out by the Lord Holder to find the Shunned).

Later when a romance and bonding occurs between two children, barely adults, it becomes difficult to swallow. Likewise when three children discover and establish three firestone mines I am left wondering where are all the adults in this book? Towards the end of the book the author stages a conversation between the three main characters, all of which must be under fifteen, in which they explain to each other, presumably to satisfy the reader, why they are so mature and ready to form lifelong partnerships. It is difficult to swallow.

2.5 stars

Debbie says

We return to the mine hold where Kindon lost all his family and Christoph showed he was a better man than his father. But we are learning more of the story from an alternate perspective, Harper Master Zist's apprentice who happens to be mute. Interesting perspective, a mute harper.

Aaron says

A well written book in the series, this book does a good job in filling out some of the details and background of the events that happen prior to, during, and after Dragon's Kin. The first half of the book directly overlaps with Dragon's kin, while the second half picks up where it left off and refers to the lives and plights of The Shunned. Those who've been exiled from teh holds for certain crimes and the dangers of the occupation of mining firestone. The dragonriders and miners must discover a new source of firestone as the last mine had blown up due to firestone's volatility and fast as they have only a couple of years before the next threadfall begins.

Susan Kennedy says

Another fantastic book. And another book that I had not read the first couple of times I read this series. These were not out yet. I had not read any of the books that she had done with her son, Todd.

I find it really interesting to get into new characters and other sides of Pern. I never would have thought I would get attached to miners and shunned, but that is exactly what happened. I knew about Firestone, but never really knew about it in depth. It was a great story full of interesting history of Firestone and great characters. There was plenty of drama and twists and turns.

The ending couldn't have been better. The miner gets what he deserves in the end. And the mute harper has love. It's a beautiful story of survival and life and love.

Kristen McQuinn says

Well, it's not really fair to judge Todd McCaffrey against his mama. Just because Anne McCaffrey is his mama doesn't mean he will write like her. And he doesn't, which is fine, really. If he tried and failed, it would be really disappointing. So that's why I think it's probably a good thing that he is writing about a different time in Pern history than Anne does, and his focus tends to be on the whers and the "civilians" rather than the dragonriders and the ruling class.

So with that reminder to myself, I can honestly say that I really enjoyed this book. I thought it was pretty complex plot-wise overall. I liked the story of the Shunned and how they might be dealt with once Thread started to fall again. I also liked the little spin that maybe not *everyone* on Pern would jump at the chance to Impress a dragon. I thought it was really cool, actually, the way Cristov put his duty as he perceived it before his own desires. Of course, he got the bronze in the end, but it was almost an afterthought. We weren't even there for the Hatching. That's all right, though. I don't think anyone can write an Impression scene a fraction as well as Anne, so I'm a little relieved Todd didn't try.

I liked the plot of the firestone as well, which is good since it is the theme of the book overall. I was so confused when they were discussing how dangerous firestone was and how it explodes on contact with water. I didn't remember any of that from Anne's Pern books. Just that it was somewhat tummy-upsetting for the dragons. But I thought it was a rather unique and clever twist to make it a different kind. There was the

added tension of knowing that the dangerous firestone seemed to be running out, and without it, the dragons can't flame Thread. So when the not!dangerous firestone was found, it was a relief, partly since no more dragons would get blown up from wet firestones and since the nicer firestone was implied to be much more plentiful.

One thing I noticed that I did NOT like was that the editing on this one was fairly shoddy. There was a Gather scene near the middle that was nearly verbatim of the Gather scene in the beginning. So much so that it gave me some major cognitive dissonance for a moment and I went back to the first Gather scene to review it. For a minute, I thought I got a defective copy that had been bound with a partial story, then the beginning bound again or something.

I also didn't care much for some of the slang he used. It seemed too out of place. I know that these Pernese are much older, closer to the actual colonists, than the original Pern of Anne's creation with F'lar and Lessa. But it still was sort of jarring when, some slang or expression was used that would sound proper in a teen today, not a Lord holder on Pern.

Overall, I give this one 3 stars because I liked it very well, but nnot loved it, and I doubt that a Todd McCaffrey book will ever earn 5 stars like Anne's. I remain hopeful, though, that I will prove myself wrong. I'd give it 3.5, if that was an option. 3 is a little too low but 4's too many.

Jeanne says

Blech.

Either I'm getting too old for these or this book wasn't up to par. Too much exposition. I had difficulty differentiating characters (miners and bad guys). I didn't really care for any of them. It'd been so long since I read the previous book that it took me a while to figure out they were dealing with the same set of circumstances. I realize they wanted to make the one Weyr's second gathering flight the same as last time, but it's just plain laziness to cut and paste the description from the first part of the book. And the last line is so cheesy I actually groaned.

As I closed the book, I said, "Well, that was a horrible book." Not horrible enough for me not to finish it, however. I don't know if it was optimism or nostalgia that kept me going. I'll probably even read the next one just because I want to know what happens in the story.

Tamcamry says

- This was an interesting book because it showed another side of the events that happened in Dragon's Kin. It also introduced some interesting characters, and told the story behind Fire Hold. Like with some of the other T.M. books, he seems to go overboard with the deferential treatment that the dragon riders get. It's not as bad in this book as it is in some of the other books. I do like the themes that T.M. goes into, like redemption and tolerance. I also like that some of the protagonists are people instead of just the mindless thread

Angie ~aka Reading Machine~ says

Pellar born mute but is an excellent tracker taught by an ex-dragonrider Mikhail along with healing arts at Harper Hall. Pellar is adopted by Masterharper Zist and his wife Cayla. Masterharper Murenney wants to find a solution to the Shunned problem before the Fall of Thread. Master Zist's apprentice Morann was sent out to make contact with the Shunned and has not been heard from since is believed to be dead. A new problem arises in the form of missing coal from Crom Hold at Camp Natalon. Master Zist is sent to the Camp to discover what is going on along with Pellar. Pellar is to be Master Zist's secret contact while at Camp Natalon. Pellar discovers that Tarik is stealing from with help from Tenim. Pellar also discovers a young girl named Halla leaving flowers on graves near Camp Natalon. Morann tries to help young children that are often orphaned and no where else to go. Pellar's fire lizard Chitter helps him keep contact with Master Zist and Harper Hall too. Pellar is sent on search for watch-where handler and finds Alessa and her gold watch-where Aleesk. Pellar helps Alessa find a trade in watch-where eggs for other goods. Pellar can also talk to D'vin and his bronze Hurth. Tarik is shunned and sent mine firestone. What will become of Tarik? What does Tenim do? Can Pellar help the Shunned? What will Halla and Morann do? Will there ever be a safe firestone mine? Your answers await you in Dragon's Fire.

Gregory says

This is the second in the series, it's pretty good, but I just hated that Tenim the bad guy seems to just keep getting away and all the good guys just keep suffering for it. Guys like him make the death penalty truly worth it... to bad there's not one on Pern.

Jim says

I approached the book with two authors with a little trepidation, I needn't have worried, the story was brilliant and I failed to notice two different styles. This was one of those books I couldn't put down. Loved the image of the dragons chewing the firestones.

Kendra says

Reread
