



Dragon's Kin

Anne McCaffrey, Todd McCaffrey

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Beginning with the classic *Dragonriders of Pern*, Anne McCaffrey has created a complex, endlessly fascinating world uniting humans and great telepathic dragons. Millions of devoted readers have soared on the glittering wings of Anne's imagination, following book by book the evolution of one of science fiction's most beloved and honored series. Now, for the first time, Anne has invited another writer to join her in the skies of Pern, a writer with an intimate knowledge of Pern and its history: her son, Todd.

DRAGON'S KIN

Young Kindan has no expectations other than joining his father in the mines of Camp Natalon, a coal mining settlement struggling to turn a profit far from the great Holds where the presence of dragons and their riders means safety and civilization. Mining is fraught with danger. Fortunately, the camp has a watch-wher, a creature distantly related to dragons and uniquely suited to specialized work in the dark, cold mineshafts. Kindan's father is the watch-wher's handler, and his son sometimes helps him out. But even that important job promises no opportunity outside the mine.

Then disaster strikes. In one terrible instant, Kindan loses his family and the camp loses its watch-wher. Fathers are replaced by sons in the mine—except for Kindan, who is taken in by the camp's new Harper. Grieving, Kindan finds a measure of solace in a burgeoning musical talent . . . and in a new friendship with Nuella, a mysterious girl no one seems to know exists. It is Nuella who assists Kindan when he is selected to hatch and train a new watch-wher, a job that forces him to give up his dream of becoming a Harper; and it is Nuella who helps him give new meaning to his life.

Meanwhile, sparked by the tragedy, long-simmering tensions are dividing the camp. Far below the surface, a group of resentful miners hides a deadly secret. As warring factions threaten to explode, Nuella and Kindan begin to discover unknown talents in the misunderstood watch-wher—talents that could very well save an entire Hold. During their time teaching the watch-wher, the two learn some things themselves: that even a seemingly impossible dream is never completely out of reach . . . and that light can be found even in darkness.

From the Hardcover edition.

Dragon's Kin Details

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From Reader Review Dragon's Kin for online ebook

Maree says

I was kind of concerned when I started this book and realized that it wasn't going to be about the usual Pernese dragons. Instead, it was about mining and werewatchers, which everyone knows are just badly created dragons. A mistake.

Or...maybe not? :D I was pretty taken aback by the new story emerging from what I assumed was a dank and dull mine shaft. This book is actually an awesome addition to Pern, and I have to say, that's what I love about this series, long and varied as it is. It's actually about the entire world of Pern, the many generations, and the many people that have made Pern their home to love (like me!). And this is a fresh twist on that world that I thought I already knew so well. I love how Todd McCaffrey's additions are going to ensure the continuation of stories with a new perspective while still staying true to the Pern we love. Very creative.

But this story itself was great, and my favorite of the three series. Well, actually, I loved the next one too. Even if it didn't deal that much with dragons, it's a sweet story about youngsters growing up in the world.

Valerie says

I expected not to like this because of the collaboration, but it was alright. I did enjoy learning something about Pern outside the Dragonriders.

Jane Irish Nelson says

This is a very moving story about using one's talents and abilities despite any handicaps one might have. Very little is known about watch-whers, the distant cousins of the dragons of Pern, but when young Kindan is chosen to receive a watch-wher's egg, he must suddenly learn how to train it. He is helped by his friend Nuella, who has secrets of her own. In addition Kindan learns when to listen and observe, and when to speak; and that secrets can be dangerous. Very believable characters. Highly recommended. This could be read by middle and high schoolers as well as adults.

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!

Ron says

Unlike many other creators of alternate worlds, Anne McCaffery continues to mine fresh ore from the soil of her imagined reality. Her storytelling is good, too.

MizzThurzday Adamz says

It was good, I'm liking the highlights of other species on PERN. Though this is typical of the McCaffery formula, right down to the snarky, just for the sake of snark character that highlights the need of the author's to vent personal frustrations.

Elizabeth R. says

It was OK. I wouldn't recommend it as a first or one of the first Pern books one reads. I was a fairly big fan of Anne McCaffrey a couple of decades ago, especially the Pern books. Saw this used recently and thought it might be fun to read a book about watch-whers and their people. It did fulfill that goal, plus some of the Pernese mining culture stuff was interesting.

It seemed like a slow starter, and I thought there were usually more visuals in Pern books. Overall I'm glad I read it, but very glad that I got it cheaply as a used paperback.

Joey V. says

When I review a book, I tend to focus on the negatives. I have a natural tendency towards deconstruction. So this time, let me first say what I DID like: New Pass, new characters. I love the continuing saga of the Ninth Pass characters and their children/grandchildren. But I do so enjoy visiting the previous passes and seeing where the history comes from. And while this is my first book of the Third Pass, I've read a bit of a preview from the next book in the chronological order, and it appears we'll be staying here for a while. Good. I want to get to know some of these people a little better.

Here's what I DON'T like. Retconning. We've established certain rules in the previously written books. And this isn't a case like Moreta, where the Ninth Pass characters believed she could talk to all dragons, and it was later revealed that she couldn't. Nearly a thousand years had passed between those books, and history can become legend. (We can't agree on what the American Civil War was about, and that was less than two hundred years ago. A thousand? Mistakes will be made.) No, this is about the abilities of watch-whers. Unless future installments detail how they change over time the way dragons do (IE: going from smaller, Ruth-sized dragons with more rational thought processes to the jet-sized Ramoth and Mnementh who are intelligent but lack abstract thought) watch-whers have certain limitations. They cannot fly. They are photophobic. Not heat-sensitive, photophobic. They have never shown any ability to go Between, and their bond with a human is more empathic than telepathic. Lessa is one of the most sensitive Riders in Pernese history, but she could barely communicate with her family's wher.

The "secret" of Nuella. From the first moment Kindan meets her, it was no secret. Might as well have been a flashing neon sign.

All in all, I liked it. I really liked it. But as with any author coming back to a work that was begun forty years prior, things have changed. I know it happens, and I understand WHY it happens, but I don't like when it happens. But the book, on the whole, I liked.

Jill Smith says

BOOK REVIEW By Jill Smith © April 2008

Do you have a favorite author? I do. Anne McCaffrey has been a staple reading diet of mine since my teens. My all time read and re-read titles being 'The Ship Who Sang', 'Decision at Doona' and 'Restoree'. As Science Fiction/Fantasy authors go she is a classic, and now her son is following in her footsteps. I thought this was a recent release but find on my search of 'The Worlds of Anne McCaffrey' website that it was released in 2003.

Returning to the world Anne McCaffrey created in 'PERN' is like returning home to a comfortable pair of slippers. The fledgling colony of Earth explorers soon loses touch with their home world and origins are wiped away. They have to develop methods to fight 'Thread fall', an organism that falls across the void from the red sister planet to Pern that eats anything it touches, soil, crops, animals or people. In this volume Anne's son Todd is co-author and the tale spun equally as delightful as any of her previous sixteen dragon series of adventures, with Todd continuing the saga with his own episode in 'Dragons blood.'

This book flows through the eyes of Kindan a young boy with few expectations within a burgeoning mining community. The mine is new and the work is dangerous but the rewards essential to the continuing growth of the Pernese. The Dragons adapted from miniature creatures called fire lizards also have a spin off cousin called the watch-whers. Both species form symbiotic relationships with their handlers who impress at hatching. The watch-whers did not seem to have a great deal of use, unless you work in the dark, such as underground in mines, and could sense danger.

Kindan tends his father's watch-wher and witnesses the fierce loyalty of the creature, digging till he dies trying to save his handler after a mine accident that leaves Kindan an orphan. As his sister, recently married and moved away from the small mining settlement, Kindan is left to live with an authoritarian Harper Master Zist (trained musician). Life gets complicated and frightening when a watch-wher egg is obtained for the mining hold and Kindan is expected to impress and take on the responsibility of being the mines watch-wher handler, forgetting forever his hopes to become a trained Harper. Naturally, Kindan's workload and adventure, mixed with imminent danger, is skillfully delivered to the reader at a heart racing pace, as Kindan, blind Nuella and master harper Zist puzzle out the lore, habits and abilities of these nocturnal creatures, they find out more about the watch-whers (and themselves) than they thought possible.

For anyone who loves a mixture of fantasy and good heartwarming and heart touching tale of growing up and evolving into maturity, this title would be one worth investing in. Naturally, I will gladly add it to my bookshelf along with a long line of her previous works, many of which I've borrowed as library books that now I wish to purchase to re read at my leisure. Certainly any one of our membership would be delighted to be able to emulate such an accomplished author with so many volumes listed as published both individually and in co-authorship.

Gypsydawn says

Wondered if son would wreck the series by changing the format but was totally delighted to find I was every bit as engrossed as before with Anne's works.

On the strength of this went out and purchased the next 3 books of the Pern collection.

MFE says

Whilst the basic story-line is one worth telling, as it does build upon the lore of Pern by dedicating a story to the often-neglected watch-whers, it is rather poorly written.

The difference in writing style between Todd and Anne is very much chalk and cheese; it is evident that Todd lacks Anne's attention to detail, descriptive prowess, and ability to pace a story appropriately. This is a shame, since the story in itself has the potential to be a charming one. The characters are flat and lifeless, seldom encouraging the reader to feel any real empathy for them.

A tolerable read, but those who are expecting the magic of Pern to be perpetuated by Todd McCaffrey will find it much less magical than Anne's previous efforts.

L.A. Catron says

I have always adored Anne McCaffrey's writing, so I was more than willing to give Todd a break and check out his style. I was curious to see how he'd continue his mother's legacy.

He got off to a rough start with some dense descriptions and nearly undecipherable family-trees. I slogged on. His skill warmed up a bit as the book went on but there were still quite a few places where fewer words would have sufficed.

I met a few characters who were okay. The best wasn't even a main character (though I think that oversight is corrected in a later book where this character earned a much more prominent role).

Dragon's Kin illuminates the role and personalities of the watch-whers, distant cousins to the mighty dragons and flighty fire-lizards. Focusing on a mining community and the hazards that come with it, this book is primarily about friendships and the harm an ill-kept secret can do to a person and a community.

I can't think of anything to really hate or love. It wasn't bad, it wasn't stellar. I love the world of Pern too much to leave it just because Todd got off to a bumpy start. I look forward to seeing how his skills grow with his next addition to the dragonlore of Pern.

Tony Pucci says

I loved reading this book! Having read (and loved) everything Anne McCaffrey has written in the Pern world, I was anxious about reading the books her son Todd had written for Pern. I needn't have worried, he seems to have the same feel for Pern. These are character-driven books. Most of the characters, except for a few cliche baddies, have a lot of depth to them, and as the reader you develop a lot of empathy for the characters. So as another immersion into the world of Pern, this book was comfort food. If I had to complain, I'd say that, one, there was little plot to this book. It could have been subtitled "A couple years in the life of Kinden and Nuella at Camp Natalon". And even when you knew how the book would end and what the final conflict was going to be, I was disappointed in how quickly the ending came and the book was over with. It was as if Mr. McCaffrey had written 295 pages and the publisher told him, "Todd, great work so far. Let's wrap it up in the next 3 pages, ok?" And while this is true, I must add that I've always been a fan of books with a long denouement, especially in character-driven stories. You live with these characters during the hours and days it took you to read the story, you hate to see them go so quickly. I always appreciate an epilogue!

Charity says

The writing in this book was TERRIBLE. It was like a middle school kid wrote it. The writing was a little jumpy and not very descriptive. The writing was just.... gosh, it was bad. However, the storyline itself wasn't too shabby. It's the only thing that kept me reading this book.

This was my first Pern novel and I've learned not to read anything written by Anne McCaffrey's son. I've yet to read anything by Anne, but I'm not going to let her son's terrible writing sway me from her. If she really is a good writer, then clearly her son is riding on her coat tails.

If you really love Pern, then I would suggest this novel to you but if you're not a die hard fan, the writing will probably turn you off pretty quick. It's not unreadable and it's a quick read if you want something simple for a trip or time off. I don't think I'll be reading the next book in this series...

Bonnie Owen says

I love the world Anne McCaffrey created with Pern and this was the first book I've read that her son, Todd McCaffrey, authored about Pern. He's got his mother's talent and I really enjoyed this story. It involves Kinden, who suffers a family tragedy in the mining camp, and how he overcomes the obstacles thrown in his way with the help of his friend, Nuella, a blind girl who is being kept secret by her family. Kindan longs to become a Harper, but it becomes his duty to train the new watch-wher, which is needed to ensure the safety of the minors. The story evolves nicely and includes a bit of intrigue and deception, leading up to a quite suspenseful episode before the story ends. I'll definitely read a few more of these Pern stories in the future.

Susan Kennedy says

Going into this book, which I had not read before, I wasn't sure if I was going to like it. It wasn't about

Dragons, instead it was about the watch-whers. I had always found them interesting, but wasn't sure that a book that was all about them would be enticing. Boy was I wrong.

Kindan and Nuella were the main characters in this story. Kindan lost his father and brothers in a disaster at the mine early on. Later, he was chosen to hatch a new watch-wher. This book focuses on him wanting to become a harper and then hatching the watch-wher. It also follows his friendship with Nuella, who is the blind daughter of the miner that is trying to get this mine to be successful so they can become a hold. He keeps Nuella hidden because he feels that others will look down on her and him because of her disability. He feels that it will also hamper her siblings ability to find spouses.

She is an amazing girl and her bond with the watch-wher and her ability to befriend other watch-whers is amazing. I fell in love with her character and that of Kindan. They are both strong and stubborn and talented in their own ways.

It was also interesting to learn more about the watch-whers and the different talents that they had. It was a fantastic read that had me crying in the end.

Darlene says

Sometimes a person has to do with what they can afford and/or find at the time. Found, at the library the hardback and the audio CDs of this book available at the same time! Score! And I own the next four hardbacks waiting for me on my own bookshelves. Problem with those is I don't have the audio/Audible versions to help me out. So it may take a while until I can read them.

Meanwhile, I had a lot of fun reading/listening to this. Dick Hill did the narration. And I think he did a better job acting out this one than others in the Pern series before. Maybe it was the writing combo of Anne and Todd McCaffrey. Maybe I was just more receptive of the story. At any rate, I just found this more fun. And I am glad that those left-over beasts of the original research that resulted in dragons, the watch-whers, can have their day in the Pernese sun. And I loved the kids that were the main characters.

I can never get enough of Anne McCaffrey's work. Glad her son joined in the fun. I look forward to reading more by both. R.I.P. Anne.

Niki Beecher says

I read the Pern books long ago. Decided to re-read in "chronological order". Then I got to the ones Todd McCaffrey wrote, both in conjunction with his mother and on his own. I made it through the first, Dragon's Kin, which wasn't TOO bad, and the second, Dragon Harper, which was okay, then got through about half of Dragon's Fire, and now a quarter of the way into Dragon Heart, I just can't go on. When I look at the ratings, I'm astonished to see his books rated as high as hers...is it just loyalty? Why can't people see the vast, gigantic difference between her most excellent writing and his pathetic attempts?

His books are pedantic, fluff-filled, stilted and downright boring. There is no life to them, the ones I've read are all about plagues, there's no humor, there are so many characters thrown in, I can't keep track of who's who, or even who's a dragon and who's a human. The dialog is terrible, the "plots" ramble around in

circles...I am totally mystified as to why they get such high ratings. I hope that people READ the 1 and 2 star reviews and don't just assume from the star count that they're as good as the REAL Pern books. I wasted some money, won't read the rest of what he's written.

Kathy Martin says

This is a story that takes place in the early years on Pern. The next threadfall is sixteen years away and a miner named Natalan is beginning a mine and hoping to make it a hold. Kindan is the youngest son of the man who is bonded to the watchwher. Watchwhers are useful in mining because they can sense bad air and gases. But one of the men who came with Natalan, his uncle Tarik, is working against Natalan and subtly sabotaging his efforts to have a successful mine.

When a cave in kills Kindan's father and brothers and the watchwher, Kindan is taken in by the harper who begins to teach him to be a harper himself. However, Natalan wants Kindan to train a new watchwher. Natalan has a blind daughter named Nuella. He has kept her a secret from the rest of the people in the camp. Kindan learns about her and together they begin to raise the new watchwher Kisk. Not much is remembered about the watchwhers and so the two kids are on their own to raise and train her.

They are aided by the harper and some dragonriders he knows who are also interested in what watchwhers can do. As they begin to explore Kisk's talents Kindan and Nuella are also learning more about their own talents and strengths.

This was an interesting story about the early years on Pern and tells of a part of the world we don't get to see in the books that are dealing with dragons, dragonriders and threadfall.

Karen A. Wyle says

I've read many books by Anne McCaffrey over the years, including several in her Dragonrider series, but since reading *Dragonwriter: A Tribute to Anne McCaffrey and Pern*, a collection of tributes to McCaffrey, I've been reading more of that series. This book is one of the better ones. Like many of the others (e.g. *The Dolphins of Pern*, and the story "Runner of Pern" in *A Gift of Dragons: Illustrated Stories*), it provides a wealth of new detail about some previously mentioned aspect of Pernese society: in this case, watch-whers, the smaller nocturnal relatives of dragons. I've been intrigued by watch-whers since the very beginning of the Pern series (the novella "Weyr Search," published in *Analog* magazine and later incorporated in *Dragonflight*) -- so it was a real treat to learn more about them.

Like Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern, *Dragon's Kin* has an extensive infodump of a prologue, but neither as extensive nor as annoying as the prologue in that novel. The protagonists, as in so many of McCaffrey's books, are sympathetic and engaging, with some properly infuriating antagonists to keep things lively.
