



The Dragon Keeper

Robin Hobb

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Too much time has passed since the powerful dragon Tintaglia helped the people of the Trader cities stave off an invasion of their enemies. The Traders have forgotten their promises, weary of the labor and expense of tending earthbound dragons who were hatched weak and deformed by a river turned toxic. If neglected, the creatures will rampage--or die--so it is decreed that they must move farther upriver toward Kelsingra, the mythical homeland whose location is locked deep within the dragons' uncertain ancestral memories.

Thymara, an unschooled forest girl, and Alise, wife of an unloving and wealthy Trader, are among the disparate group entrusted with escorting the dragons to their new home. And on an extraordinary odyssey with no promise of return, many lessons will be learned--as dragons and tenders alike experience hardships, betrayals . . . and joys beyond their wildest imaginings.

The Dragon Keeper Details

Date : Published June 1st 2009 by Voyager

ISBN : 9780007273744

Author : Robin Hobb

Format : Hardcover 553 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Dragons, Fiction, Epic Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Dragon Keeper for online ebook

Petrik says

3.5/5 stars

A good foundational start to a quartet but it's also the weakest start within any of Hobb's series so far.

Dragon Keeper is the first book in the Rain Wild Chronicles quartet, which also marks the beginning of the fourth out of five subseries within Hobb's The Realm of the Elderlings series. The entire storyline in this book took place in the Rain Wild section of the world and plot-wise, the first book has a very simple premise. The Dragon Keepers have to herd the dragons to find their lost legendary city, Kelsingra. That's it, that's seriously the plot of this book. There's no complexity in the story so far, it's completely a setup for the next three books. There are no climax sequences or tense moments, completely zero actions here; even less than all Hobb's previous books. The climax sequences—if you can call it that—revolves around the Dragon Keepers fighting over an Elk's meat to share. Yup, you heard that right. Fighting over an Elk's meat. Bloody intense, bruh, I'm shaking in my boots. I'm not sure but I heard this is the publisher's fault as this was supposed to be one giant book but the publisher decided to divide it into two instead and it makes the book to not have any sense of ending.

We follow the story from the perspective of five new characters: Thymara, Alise, Sedric, Leftrin, and Sintara. As I said before, this is just a foundational book. Although it's almost 600 pages long, almost nothing actually happened in the story, it's all about laying the groundwork for future books by doing characterizations first. The characterizations were great but I'm still not charmed by them like how I was with Fitz or the characters in the Liveship Traders. The problem is I felt the characters felt a bit too childish or YA-ish, even the way Hobb wrote them felt different to Hobb's usual complex characters. Plus, the dragon's POV was boring. I'm a fan of Hobb's Liveship Traders trilogy but even there, one of my minor complaints were the Serpent's PO; the Dragon's POV was practically the same thing as that. If you enjoyed the Serpent's POV in Liveship Traders you might not face this problem.

The main highlight of this book for me was the Liveship Traders characters cameo. They didn't appear a lot but when they do, I was overjoyed but their appearance, Hobb has written something really great about her characters in the Liveship Traders in my opinion.

Hobb's prose here also felt a bit different. It still captivated me and the characterizations were great, but it's simply not as great compared to how she wrote Farseer, Liveship Traders or Tawny Man trilogy. I usually end up highlighting a lot of passages/quotes in her books, there's absolutely none here which I found memorable.

Overall, Dragon Keeper is a good foundational book but it's certainly Hobb's weakest start in her gigantic series. However, I'm hopeful that the foundation laid here will bring a great result for the next three books in this quartet.

*You can find **this** and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at **BookNest***

Mark Halse says

Though it pains me to give a Robin Hobb book anything less than 5 stars the ending to this book was an enormous middle finger. This story was clearly chopped up by a publisher in hopes of making as much money as possible. The page count of each book alone is telling of this crime.

Publishing politics aside, this book was Hobb business as usual and that means excellent character development. Robin Hobb writes stories that become a part of you and that's all a reader can ask.

Highly recommended if you have book two at the ready.

Kaora says

It took me a little bit to get into this one, which isn't unheard of for a Robin Hobb book since she is so thorough with her characterization. However, I still didn't enjoy this one nearly as much as her other series' so I reduced it a star.

Her characters are still decent, but I found that I have not connected with any yet, which was disappointing. The story is interesting enough to keep me turning those pages, but not much was accomplished in this one. Hopefully that will not be the case with the next.

I am still a HUGE fan of hers and am excited to check out the rest of this series.

Samantha says

3.5 stars. Great, but not my favorite of Hobb's books. Definitely seems like a big set-up book though and I've heard good things about the rest of the series. So here's to book 2!

Helene Jeppesen says

I was looking for a great fantasy story and that is exactly what I got. This book contains dragons, and even though this is clearly the beginning of a big journey and we don't get to spend that much time with the dragons, I can sense that Robin Hobb is going to rectify that in the next books in the series. I liked how the dragons were portrayed as vulnerable as well as strong and fierce animals, because that made me grow to like them and care for them. We also get to follow the story from one of the dragons' perspective which I thought was great.

Basically, this book is written in a lot of perspectives and I was a fan. I think Alise was my favourite character because she grows to be very independent, but there was not one character that I didn't like reading about. I was a bit confused, though, with the letters appearing between each chapter. They didn't add anything to the story for me, and I read through them quickly so that I could get on with the real story. All in all, I was quite a fan of this book and that's why I immediately ordered the sequel so that I can continue on with the journey.

Lisa says

Review from Tenacious Reader: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2015/1...>

It took me a while to get to this series, and I'm not entirely sure why since I count Robin Hobb as one of my favorite authors. I also have to confess to reading the different series that make up The Realm of the Elderlings in the wrong order as I was ignorant of how much interconnection there is between all of them. So, lesson learned. Going into this series (The Rain Wilds Chronicles), I have read all the other published books that make up Realm of the Elderlings (for those unfamiliar, it is comprised of The Farseer Trilogy, The Liveship Traders Trilogy, The Rain Wilds Chronicles and The Fitz and the Fool Trilogy). That means I have read books both preceding and following this trilogy. I will be very upfront, reading the books/series out of order is a mistake. I really had no idea how much connected between them. But now I do, and even with my unique reading order, I am really enjoying this. Actually, I have to confess to enjoying knowing some of the connections that come from my knowledge of The Fitz and the Fool books, but I would have preferred to have read them in order and made the connections as they were presented.

This book starts with the hatching of the cocoons created by the serpents at the end of The Liveship Traders. These poor things were not given the proper start at life as they should have been. The journey they made to cocoon was far from ideal and took its price. And as a result, the hatched dragons are sorry things that dependent on humans and confined by their lack of flight. It is an interesting situation as dragons are born with memories of their ancestors, so they are very aware of the shortcomings and the life they are missing.

We get a much closer look at life in the Rain Wilds and what it is like to grow up "heavily touched" by the Rain Wilds. This is an area that we have seen bits of in Liveship Traders, but it was never focused on to the extent it is here. While most people in the Rain Wilds are "touched" in some way (meaning they have physical characteristics that resemble dragon traits), there are those that go beyond just the bit of scaling that many have. Thymara is a protagonist who is one of those that even by Rain Wilds standards is considered an outcast by her level of change. It's hard not to like Thymara and her relationship with her father is touching. I also really respected her desire to do more than her father expected of her, to look for something to do with her life.

Alise is a character that I have had a bumpier ride with. Don't get me wrong, I like her, but there are some aspects of her personality that could make cringe at times. She is the daughter of a Bingtown trader family, but hers is not a wealthy family, and she is not terribly attractive. As she passed prime marrying age without a single suitor, she has resigned to a life of spinsterhood, until suddenly she has, for some reason, caught the eye of Hest Finback, a wealthy and very handsome Trader son. Of course, as we all know, if something seems too good to be true, there is liable to be a reason. It's just a matter of if Alise can ever truly see that reason. But even if she does, she may see the business logic in not being alone the rest of her life. She can be terribly practical. While she was anticipating spending her days alone as a spinster, she decided to take up an unusual hobby as a woman, and pursue studying dragons and Elderlings. This is the part of her personality I like, her drive to do something other than just sit and embroider, and plan party and decorate. You know, all the expected hobbies of a "proper" young woman. (boring!) Alise broke from the mold by pursuing her own interests, and I had to admire her for that trait.

I loved the intersection of the Rain Wilds characters and Alise's storyline, bringing Bingtown and Rain Wilds together. I enjoyed seeing appearances and hearing references to characters I grew to love from

Hobb's other books and am so glad I finally am filling in this gap in my reading. Books like this reinforce my decision to do a Backlist Burndown. Dragon Keeper is the start of a journey that is making me binge read this series. So, yeah. I am glad I finally made time for this one!

Shelby M. (Read and Find Out) says

This story is intriguing! I was a little nervous because the Rain Wild Chronicles has mixed reviews. I LOVED seeing the dragons, and so enjoyed being back in the Rain Wilds.

else fine says

I grew up on a toxic waste dump. I realize that sounds melodramatic, but technically it's accurate. My childhood home was ringed by no fewer than five Superfund sites - and, as we like to say, those are just the spots they've *cleaned*.

When I was a kid people weren't so concerned about the pollution. Arsenic was in the dust we kicked up on the playgrounds, on the berries we picked in the woods, in the small ponds where nothing lived and no birds ever stopped. The waterways were lined with gray heaps of slag from the copper smelter, in some spots enlivened by oil-slick rainbow stains made by unknown chemicals seeping out from the rocks. We were told not to fish or swim in the bay, which seemed to us kids to be hilarious: looking down off the docks into the still, metallic depths, we couldn't picture fish living down there at all, let alone anything you'd think of eating. And that was just the water. I still don't know what the mills were belching into the air, or what they're still churning out - sometimes, when the wind is right, you can both smell and taste the air: a sulphuric grit which stings your eyes and irritates your throat.

Now it's been spruced up. They sealed off the slag heaps and built fancy condos on top of them, planted new grass along the edges, dug up people's lawns and replaced them with new, cleaner topsoil. The smelter company offered a cash settlement to the people living closest to the plant, and they took it, even though the surveys hadn't been completed. They worked hard to restore the bay, and now when you stroll through the new grass and out along the docks you can look down to see bright colonies of starfish and sea anemones clinging to the piers, and deeper down, the quick dark shapes of fish.

Later, of course, we learned that the pollution went farther and deeper than the smelter operators had admitted to. Too late for the people who had settled, and too late for all of us who grew up splashing in that water and breathing that air. Statistics are readily available about disease rates in my hometown, telling us that you're much more likely to die of obscure cancers or get heart or lung disease there. I haven't seen anything on autoimmune disease, except that it's a hotspot for diabetes. I'm curious mostly because everyone I know, just about, has something crazy and unlikely wrong with them. Lupus, MS, celiac disease, autism, Crohn's disease, asthma - you name it. We're a sickly bunch.

We're not alone. All over the planet, people grow up in the shadow of industrial toxins, watch their kids and their friends get sick and die, watch their own bodies with wary concern. What can you do? You go on. Sometimes your pain and your poison can be transmuted into something beautiful, into art, into action, into something meaningful. Sometimes you just have to learn to accept your limitations and endure the pain.

And so this is a story for us. Here is a world where profit has trumped issues of morality and health, where generations grow up living with the legacy of pollution. It's sort of a counterpoint to the sunny ending of the Liveship books, where dragons and men are reunited and the deformed people of the Rain Wilds are transformed into something better. In this new series, we meet the people who were left behind, still deformed, without the hope that some magical intervention will save them from themselves. How they go on, and how they learn to transform themselves, is nothing short of inspirational.

This is what fantasy is best at, and this is why it's necessary.

Franco Santos says

Some memories are best left undisturbed. Sometimes, if you forget something, it's because it's better forgotten.

Gracias, Hobb, por esta introducción de personajes de 550 páginas. En *The dragon keeper* se presentan las bases para lo que va a suceder en los siguientes tomos de la saga, quiero creer. A pesar de esto, es un buen libro, entretenido y para nada pesado.

Mili says

I just cannot get bored with Robin Hobb :D Ive been away this weekend busying around in the Rainwild. No one to bother me but my dry cough and tired body. I swooshed through the book, while normally Im a slow reader. Her writing simply captivates you till the end, like a trance. Even though there is no action. So glad to be backin that world with every character pulling you, engrossing you with their every step.

Felicia says

Robin Hobb wrote a few of my FAVORITE series, Assassin's Apprentice and the Liveship Traders, so I'm always a fan of her books. This one was as well written as the others, but it felt slow to start, and as soon as the story picked up, the book ended! JUST AS I GOT INTO IT!

So, I guess I should be waiting for the next book excitedly to continue the story, but considering the subject matter of the book, I'm a bit reluctant to follow up with the series, for totally squeamish personal reasons. The whole story follows dragons, MALFORMED dragons who can't really take care of themselves. I am a person who's favorite movie is Babe. Yeah, the pig movie. While at the movies watching the Peter Jackson King Kong redo, I became so hysterical when they were capturing the ape that I had to leave the theatre and NOT GO BACK IN. Ever. Yeah, so I'm kind of irrational when reading about animals in danger, or even threatened. So basically, the set up for the next books is gonna lead to a LOT OF DRAGON TRAUMA, I JUST KNOW IT! And I dunno if I can personally hang in there. Robin Hobb is great at torturing her characters, and I'm cool with doing that to humans, but doing it to the dragons may not be something I can sign up for, ultimate happy ending or not.

I know this review doesn't help anyone, haha, but whatever. That's the deal. The book was slow to start but ok, and I'm sure it will continue wonderfully. For those who aren't a little bit crazy :)

Alex Ristea says

Dragon Keeper is definitely a book for Robin Hobb fans, and fans only.

A fair warning that this is a *slow* book. It's the first half of Book 1, technically, having been split for publishing reasons, so the story doesn't get underway for a long, long time. A lot of the text is spent building up characters and their motivations, so expect lots of exposition between dialogue.

But who cares, it's Robin Hobb! We get right into the heads and mindset of being a dragon (similar to being a cat...), and some of the scenes show a masterful play between humans and dragons. The language, as always, is superb, and you will have never savoured a story more than this. It's like a long walk in the woods, where you don't really have anywhere to be, and no responsibilities weighing on your mind.

And the politics! It doesn't all have to be court intrigue and power struggles like we're used to in the genre. Hobb gives you real characters on a much smaller scale, but the emotional payoff is none smaller for it.

I read this with The Robin Hobb Collection book club—hop in the discussion with us!

Kaitlin says

I read this book once again as a buddy read with my loyal group of Robin Hobb readers. We're all a bit obsessed with her work by this point honestly and we'd all been missing this world and these characters so being able to dive back into a story of Elderlings, Magic, Monsters and Myths was just wonderful and although this isn't my favourite of her books I still really enjoyed this. It is a shorter book than many of the Hobb ones I've recently read, and the story does have a few skips in time and a little bit of recapping which I didn't love, but honestly it's Robin Hobb and her excellent world and characters and we do see some truly wonderful developments in this book.

This book in particular is set in the Rain Wilds, a section which we have already explored a little in the Liveship Traders books and it's a place which I instantly fell in love with. The people of the Rain Wilds have to live in vast, enormous canopies of trees because the river that they live near is toxic and erodes boats and skin alike. The only boats that can travel the river are the Liveships which have magical properties, and the people who live in the area suffer greatly for their proximity to the river and harsh land. However, there are many secrets and adventures to be found here too and we follow a couple of new characters in this book who promise to discover some pretty big events and secrets.

The characters who are new in this book include Captain Leftrin, Thymara and Alise. Each of these characters lives either within Bingtown, the Rain Wilds or is a trader with the two and has a lot of ties to both these places and the people we've met in previous books who live here too. I found myself quickly being intrigued by each of them, although I think that Thymara and Alise were easily the two whom I connected with quickest. I enjoyed Leftrin's story too, it just took me a little while to warm up to him. Leftrin is a trader who uses his ship, the oldest one which can travel the Rain Wild River, to trade up and down it. He's a middle aged fellow with few prospects ahead other than his day to day life which he enjoys immensely...until he meets someone and his whole perspective is changed and challenged and his view of

day to day life gets manipulated too. I liked Leftrin as a character the more I got to know him but he does still feel like the character we know the least about. He's a likeable person with some unlucky situations, I will certainly look out for more of him in the upcoming books!

Thymara is a young girl who was never meant to be alive. She's a disgrace, a monster and even her own family (except her father) wanted to dispose of her. I instantly liked her spark of life and her adventurous and intelligent nature. Being constantly known as an outsider she's someone I found interesting to read about and her story quickly takes some very exciting turns which I have no doubt will lead to more and more adventure!

Finally Alise, she's probably the one we most focus on in this book and she's certainly someone who I liked and then didn't like and then liked. I liked her because she's an expert on Dragons and Elderlings which is something I too have a fascination with. She's calm and clever and full of ideas of what she wants to do, she's also a little weak and doesn't quite have that spark that we know some of Hobbs other characters have found or developed. Over the course of the book we do see the beginnings of her finding herself, and I found that by the ending I was really loving who she was becoming :)

We do have some other characters too such as Tats, Sedric and Hest, all of whom are also new and very different. Some of them are sweet and kind, others mean and horrible. I love that Hobb can really make me feel strong emotions of all kinds towards her characters and for each of these three my feelings were ever tested.

As for the pacing of this book it was a little bit rushed at times. I've become used to seeing a slow build up with Robin Hobb towards an eventual epic conclusion and parts of this book did skip forwards through large chunks in order to tell a story more completely. Whilst I liked that we got to the present day storyline, I felt it could maybe have been done a little smoother, and so I hope this is something we won't encounter again any time soon. With that said I do think that because this is a shorter book than many of her others and because she wants each series to be a potential entry point I understood the need for it and it wasn't a major detraction at all for me.

The ending of this book is not what I was expecting at all. I think it's rather abrupt and very 'stop you in your tracks'. I just didn't see it heading that way, and I didn't think that it would be so sudden and wild. I think it worked as a shock factor and it was pretty bold and daring to end a book that way, it certainly makes me want to know what will happen next and I can't wait to move on with the story. A solid 4* read overall, and of course one I really enjoyed!

(I read this as part of the #BookBuddyAThon with Mercedes)

Bookdragon Sean says

I feel somewhat sorry for the dragons in this. They spent the entirety of the Liveship Trader's trilogy trying to find a place to evolve out of their basic serpent form, and when they do find it most of them die in the process. They're too mutated and twisted to be able to develop into dragons. Only fourteen remain by the end and even those are stunted and unusual, that much so that the dragon Tintaglia abandons them for a richer prospect, mating with the ancient dragon Icefyre in Fool's Fate. So they're on their own.

Nobody wants them

These new dragons are a nuisance. The Rain Wild folk want them gone because they are a blight on their recourses; they want them gone because they are growing increasingly dangerous and are wanting more and

more food as they get even bigger. In addition, some mutated teenagers amongst their own people are a so called embarrassment to civilisation. So, ever so pragmatically, the rulers decide to pair up one of these weird kids with a dragon and send them off on their own looking for an ancient city. Sounds like a great move? They lose two problems, but don't really consider the consequence of possible success.

Thymara has been hated all her life for her lizard features; thus, when a chance like this comes up she jumps at it, and who can blame her. Not many people get to interact with dragons albeit stunted ones. Her dragon, however, is haughty and superior; she distains all those she perceives as beneath her. So Tymara has a rather interesting task on her hands, which leads to some difficult and amusing situations. She has to deal with a dragon who thinks herself a god of the sky when in reality she is half grown and misshapen, and is struggling to accept the realities of who she is. It seems to me these two are perfectly suited to each other.

They are driven by ancient memories

I love the complexities of the dragons here. They remember all the lives of their ancestors, and they consume the bodies of dead dragons to gain more memories. This way the dragons are wise and experienced without having to do anything to get such gifts. This means that these dragons, though young, know exactly how to salvage their situation and grow into their destinies as rulers of the sky. They are instinctively driven to the ancient city of Kelsingra; their refuge and new beginning.

So this drives the novel forward, and gives the characters hope in an almost impossibly difficult situation. But, this is a Robin Hobb novel. So that means the story is paced out superbly with the journey only beginning as the book closes. She really knows how to add such depth to her world. From this point, I think this series has more potential than the LiveShip Traders. The story seems tighter and the characters more desperate. There's going to be some exciting times ahead reading the reading the next three books; it has been far too long Robin Hobb, the queen of fantasy.

Loederkoningin says

The Dragon Keeper is not epic. It doesn't wow me. It doesn't overwhelm me the way Hobb's books usually do (*cough* with the exception of her *Soldier Son* trilogy, I awkwardly bit the dust halfway through it *cough*). This book should be read as an introduction to the books to come. Toward the end, things do heat up when all those newly introduced characters are thrown on a boat together (which results in the first sneaky power games) and head for a vaguely remembered magical city somewhere out there in the Rainwolds.

I'm super confident that the books to come will be amazing. And I'm excited to find out what Hobb has in store. However, several of what I consider those special, superb Hobb-ingredients are missing in *The Dragon Keeper*. Compelling characters for instance. For a big chunk of the book only Alise seems nicely fleshed out. And even she lacks the spunk of Althea and Malta, the two incredible heroines from *The Liveship Traders*. Graft (a Draco Malfoy including servants) and Sedric have potential. But captain Leftrin isn't exactly Brashen Trell material. His ability to impress me in the books to come will probably co-depend on whether he's capable of successfully corrupting Alise.

My main concern however..I miss that charming, evil bastard of a pirate Kennit!

Or ANY Kennit-ish character. Darn it!

More importantly, Hobb always made a point of cleverly weaving multiple layers through her stories, some so hidden and secret, that as a reader I often sensed there was a delicious magical undercurrent to the story that was just.. beyond.. my.. reach. In *The Dragon Keeper*, what you see is mostly what you get: dragon as well as human misfits heading on a desperate dragon dung and mud filled quest. Those intriguing Rainwild people are no longer a mystery, as they were when a veiled Reyn Khuprus offered Malta the most magical gifts. The dreamlike Elderlings with their buried cities lost a little of their appeal as well, now that it has become clear that humans can become them, when touched by dragons.

Last but not least, is it crucial to read *The Liveship Traders* and *The Farseer* books before picking up this one? Yes and no. The latter will definitely provide you with the complete picture (and Hobb masterly connects her works, which often results in "oh my god, Amber is actually.... and wait a minute..Paragon looks exactly like... eureka moments, that I know I wouldn't have wanted to miss). But the *Farseer* books are skippable.

However, *The Dragon Keeper* picks up where *The Liveship Traders* trilogy left of. without having read those, I doubt this one will be a satisfying read.
