



Dragon's Heart

Jane Yolen

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Austar IV isn't the planet it once was, and when Jakkin and Akki finally return to the dragon nursery, their homecoming arouses mixed emotions. Together they've survived the insurmountable, and now they can weather the brutal conditions of Dark After and communicate with the dragons they love. But with this knowledge comes responsibility. What they've learned about survival could transform the planet--or, if entrusted to the wrong hands, bring about its destruction. Akki's insistence that she return to the Rokk to finish her training and begin new experiments drives a chasm between her and Jakkin. Suddenly she finds herself in the midst of a political battle that could claim her life. Only Jakkin can save her. If only he could reach her. . . .

Dragon's Heart Details

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From Reader Review Dragon's Heart for online ebook

Lindsay Schopfer says

The first book in this series was one of those special reads that I'll always remember and cherish. The two sequels, while not as strong, were still fairly enjoyable.

This fourth installment was a surprise to me. First, I was impressed by Yolen's bravery to tackle this project after a 20 year break. Not only that, but she starts this book literary where the third book ended, which I really appreciated. I didn't want to see Jakkin and Akki twenty years later, and I appreciate the way this book takes up their story right where we left off.

That being said, I'm sad to admit that this book may pick up their story at the right place, but it puts it right back down again and walks briskly away. There is no plot here. It's a jumble of random events and decisions, with characters stumbling their way to the next artificial conflict that has little overall impact and is easily resolved. Even the conflict that causes the final climax has no weight. It's a leftover plot thread stretched over the last quarter of the novel.

The characters were familiar, but paled in comparison to their earlier portrayals. Jakkin and Akki are suddenly squabbling teenagers again, Golden is without flaws, Dr. Henkky is a trophy wife, and Likkarn is reduced to a cliché that not only doesn't fit his character but hamstring much of the series' original backstory.

So why am I giving it three stars, rather than one or two? Because of the Drakk hunt. Because of the sandals. Because of the wort patches and the pitchers of takk and the pick-buzz of insects. This is a Pit Dragon novel. For all its flaws and disappointing moments, this novel still fits with the other three books, written two decades earlier. That's a rare accomplishment, and Jane Yolen deserves some admiration for her courage and dedication to write a story that she likely only penned out of love to her dedicated fans.

James says

It's about a girl who cracked a window or a mirror which was a portal to a world with a man and dragons. This girl was in a house. One thing I like about this book is it has dragon's and I like dragons. One thing I dislike about this book is that the dragons.

Skip says

After their return from hiding in the caves and their evolution into a hybrid species, Akki and Jakkin find themselves forced to deal with a changed world where bonders are now free. Akki does to Rokk to try to find the science behind their evolution and is kidnapped as part of a political battle for a seat in the senate. Jakkin is frantic and uses his dragons to help find and rescue Akki. I liked this fourth story better than the earlier ones.

Anne Osterlund says

Yay!!! Finally, after I know not how long, there is a fourth Pit Dragon Chronicles book. I am not generally a huge fan of books about dragons, but the Pit Dragon Chronicles are an exception. With two wonderful lead characters, especially Jakkin, a young man raised in bondage with absolutely nothing going for him except an extraordinary love of one very special dragon, the books are wonderfully written, especially the first two books, Dragon's Blood and Heart's Blood, and intriguing. The third book felt anti-climactic and Dragon's Heart finally resolves that sad state of affairs with a far more satisfying conclusion.

Jakkin and Akki return from the mountains where they have been held captive for over a year. Return to a home that is no longer home. A world that has undergone revolution. And friends who are no longer friends and may well be enemies. But the real problem is that Jakkin and Akki are no longer the people they were when they left. They now have a secret. And a mission. To save the people of Austar and the dragons . . . if they can survive long enough to do so.

Nick says

This is legitimately book four of a trilogy, written years later because fans convinced the author that the trilogy left several things unresolved.

Well, the book does resolve at least most of those issues, although it brings up a couple of new plot threads at the last minute that would make interesting spinoffs, and the "trog" subplot isn't resolved at all.

Technically SF, but the story style and some of the elements feel more like fantasy in their execution, much like McCaffrey's Dragonriders books. In fact, the first volume was marketed as: Dragon's Blood: A Fantasy, right there on the cover blurb...

Very good, but you will have to read the trilogy first in order to make sense of the story.

Lara says

Look what you did, you revisited a perfectly good complete trilogy after something like 20 years, and now it's got anxiety. Dragons can now do all manner of things they couldn't do before, everyone's OOC, and *that's not how you spell that one character's name, how hard is it to just glance back at a previous book to check the spelling...*

Anyway. I was happy to revisit Austar IV, but it's not the same Austar IV I remember, and I'm just going to pretend this book didn't really happen.

An Odd1 says

"He couldn't have been more wrong" p 291. I like author Yolen's style. Usually. Lullabies and poems intersperse with political wrangling - boring, or simple straightforward. "Yes, his first line of defense had to be delay. Foot drag. Twist an ankle. Start a fight. Fall down. All of the above" p 290.

Although I found some parts confusing, I'm glad the author's planned trilogy expanded into "Chronicles".

This book didn't need so much repetition, Preface, even political arguments "vote for the one who promises free chikkar or a new job or brings on the bag girls" p 112. Even though the story arc generally finished, the universe could have more. liked the series enough to give more a try. Concentrating on secret about blood, they forgot to research metal-making skills from cavemen trogs.

Planet Austar IV changes under embargo. Return of Jakkin and Akki arouses mixed emotions. They now survive brutal cold night, and telepath pictures with dragons, each other. Such knowledge could transform or destroy the planet. When Akki wants to finish medical training at the Rokk and start research experiments, former enemy kidnaps her. Can Jakkin save her?

Funny to imagine Jakkin sending to Akki "eyes get all squinty and you stare" p 25. Likkarn "Lik and Spittle" p 24 "forgetfulness .. the old man was surely in his fifties already" [--] p 132, had lived among dragons, could probably catch sendings. Likkarn inherited nursery, gave half to be shared among workers. I don't understand why he lets Erikkin "stared at the wall" p 173 and Slakk slack off.

Dragon smell now sounds like bad stink "the smell of a male dragon simply took one's breath away" p 85. Maybe referring to "hen's smell" for mother dragon reminds me of poultry hen barns, choking at first breath. Using "fewmets" p 87 for spoor, a medieval term in King Arthur tomes, suits the setting although outer space.

I especially like the fate of the villain. (view spoiler) I'm not fond of blather *Encyclopedia Galactia* excerpts, front #33, back #34. Buried deep is 50-year embargo. Clue in when Slackk "kept sending gouts of blood and flame" p 140 when hand bloody inside "opened belly [where] lay a clutch of white eggs" of dying drekk. (view spoiler)

Surprises. Two other deaths. Arakk 16 p 171 falls from tree during drakk hunt. For a new character, "moon-faced" p 76 "sunny disposition" p 75, mourning is strong. Perhaps because "It could just as easily have been me!" p 172 from Jakkin. (view spoiler) Guess who is Jakkin's half-uncle? (view spoiler)

If Jakkin 17 spends a year in caves, is he not 18+ here? Akki is 17 p 235. Akki acts childish. Golden nicknames her "Aurea" p 205 (gold), she announces "Argent .. silver" p 214. She threatens, almost blackmails, Dr Henkky "if you can help me I'll stay" p 211. "I'm not going" p 215 resists Golden's plans. No gratitude? He cleared their names, gives them home "her own room, this big bed" p 225 in The Rokk. Hatchling imprinted on Akki, so she takes her to the Rokk, with no thought to her housing and food. Henkky arranges pen in Golden's garden.

Akki recognizes senate candidate at debate from rebel cell. (view spoiler) He kidnaps her at gunpoint, tortures her for answers.

Meanwhile, Jakkin is kidnapped by two cavemen who trailed him back to the nursery and want back their dragons. He drains a stinger of power completely, "now useless" p 310 because of the embargo, on the smallest trog, two bigger still free. Sssargon is held in a pit by "empty"-mind trainer Garrekk "not everyone who has blood scores or works with dragons can hear them" p 352. (view spoiler)

Definitions:

epicene = like both or neither sex

p 149 "johnnyloo" clever created word

Typos?:

p 143 "I'll send Arakk back here to take turns with you", Balakk said. Yet

p 146 Jakkin said "I'll stand guard the rest of the night .. true to his word, he stood over Slakk until .. day.

p 149 "Arakk and Tanekk, both about his [Jakkin] own age" Yet

p 171 Arakk is "a hefty sixteen-year-old", Jakkin was 17 in #2 before year in caves

Kristi says

I quite liked my return to the Pit Dragon Chronicles in this most recent addition to Yolen's series. I didn't reread the other books before I picked this one up, and didn't find it difficult to remember where I'd left off, even though it had been several years since I read the third in the series.

Jakkin and Akki return from their exile in the mountains completely changed and they find that the world they left behind has changed in their absence as well. They decide to hide their new telepathic abilities gained by sheltering in the egg chamber of Heart's Blood after her death to save themselves from the searing cold of Dark After. But hiding such powers aren't as easy as they hoped. And there are still dark forces at work on Austar and Jakkin and Akki are once again caught up into the heart of them.

Janni says

I've been looking forward to this one for a while now. :-) Book four of the Pit Dragon books definitely lived up to the first three, and felt very much in tone with them even though it's been more than 20 years since the the third book was published.

Whether you've read the other books before or not, you'll definitely want to read or reread the original Pit Dragon trilogy first. *Dragon's Heart* picks up literally where *A Sending of Dragons* leaves off, and deals with some of the consequences of what's happened in that book, as well as in *Heart's Blood*. I think there's still at least one question left unanswered at the end of book four--but even so, the series very much felt complete to me, in a way it never quite did after book three.

One of the fun things, on reread, was realizing how while Jakkin, the protagonist, was fairly clueless about the gender politics of his world, Akki, the female lead, was always very aware of them, from the very first book. This made me especially delighted to see that, in *Dragon's Heart*, we get her POV for the first time, alongside Jakkin.

(I find myself wanting to compare Tenar, Menolly, and Akki now, and how they respond to--or even notice--the oppression of their worlds in their original trilogies, all begun within about a decade of each other, but that of course would be a post all its own.)

Anyway, if you liked the first three Pit Dragon books, you'll like this one too. Be sure to read through to the end, including and especially the final *Encyclopedia Galaxia* entry.

Cait says

A sequel! A sequel! Look -- it's book four at last!

I reread the first three just before picking up this one; the transition was certainly jarring and I saw a few errors in consistency, but overall this book fits in very well with the older books.

That's good and bad, as it turns out. The main thing that drove me nuts in the earlier books, especially the first two, was people jumping to conclusions instead of talking to each other, and most of the arguments between Akki and Jakkin made me want to reach into the book and slap them both. Yes, they're teenagers, but they're teenagers who've been *living together on the run for a year* and who can *read each others' minds*.

Also, this is the book where things with sex -- or the coyness around it -- can only be called weird. Again I say: *living together* for a year. In a *cave*. Granted, they had less need than usual to huddle for warmth, but still. These lines from the third book, *A Sending of Dragons*, remain the sweetest moment between the two of them in the whole series (and they aren't even together) --

When he really became bored with his own company and felt himself slipping back into the half-sleep, he invented imaginary dialogues with Akki. She ended every one of those conversations with a hug. He got so he could feel her arms around him, the softness of her cheek on his.

And the surprise gay secondary characters were...strange. Also the thing -- I'm trying really hard not to give spoilers here -- the thing with Likkarn was far too pat and undermined him a lot.

All of that aside! I really enjoyed this book. A lot of the questions thrown open at the end of *A Sending of Dragons* were explored here, and I was satisfied with the ending of this story because it *didn't* have answers. This is the story of Jakkin and Akki, not of Austar IV -- well, mostly the story of Jakkin, although Akki's role is somewhat expanded -- and its central concepts are trust and responsibility. Solving the world's problems (and giving it new ones) can be handwaved in the epilogue if the characters' stories are resolved.

I was pleased with most of Likkarn and amused by the complications poor Doctor Henk(k)y faced, and Sssargon remains ridiculous and cute.

I would love to see more of this world's questions explored, but I don't know if Jakkin's story can give any more than it has; what I'd really like would be other people's stories, more exploration of the consequences of the slavery laws being lifted, some coherent explanation of the mountain cave dwellers (who are bizarrely called "trog" in this book with no explanation of the source of that name) and their settlements, and for someone to realize that the *food* economy of Austar is about to be *smashed*.

Kaye says

A fun series - a bit too young for me, but I enjoyed it nevertheless.

Kathryn says

Well. It was good to see the characters again. I loved all the bits with the dragons, the development with Likkarn was interesting...y'know I'm having a hard time getting enthusiastic about this book. It wasn't a bad, certainly (the political bits were a muddled mess, but I felt the same way about parts of the second book), and there were a couple parts that were, I don't know, nice? Not sure if I lost interest because it's been more than twenty years between reading this and reading the third book, or it's because there were more than twenty years between Yolen WRITING this and writing the third book. I'm a little bit annoyed that the two

biggest unfinished elements from the ending of "A Sending Of Dragons" (the secret telekinetic power from dragons, and the murderous colony of mutant outlaws who KNOW about the secret telekinetic power from dragons) aren't completely solved, or get wrapped up in the epilogue. But for the most part I'm glad I finally read this. Aaaaand I think I'll post this one back on paperbackswap now.

Jessica says

First of all, you have to understand that Jakkin Stewart is probably my first "literary character crush." He's handsome, smart, strong, kind . . . AND HAS HIS OWN DRAGON. I read the original trilogy at a young, impressionable age, and determined that a)I must have my own dragon and b)I loved Jakkin. So when I found out that after 25+ years, Yolen had written a sequel, I nearly fainted. First thought: YAY! Second thought: WHAT IF IT'S TERRIBLE?!

Ah, Jane, I knew you wouldn't let me down!

Yolen slips seamlessly back into the world of Austar IV, a former penal colony plagued by indentured servitude, hostile climate, and monstrous beasts. Picking up shortly after *A Sending of Dragons* leaves off, Jakkin and Akki are dealing with the consequences of being able to speak mind-to-mind with dragons . . . and wrestling with the problem of whether or not to share this skill with the rest of the world. All my fears were quickly dismissed as "my" people (Jakkin, Akki, Likkarn, Golden) all stayed true to, ahem, character. The dialogue, the action, the romance, everything was precisely in keeping with the earlier trilogy, in short: a sheer delight for a fan like me. I loved the book, and the resolution.

So if you, like me, have been wondering what happened to our friends and their brood of dragons, fear not: the author has provided a brilliant final chapter to their story. (Yes, I'm guessing from the epilogue that Yolen is saying goodbye for good to Austar IV. But it's a great goodbye!)

Sarah (Inklings Read) says

Ahhh I'm so happy that I've finally received the opportunity to read/review this book! What a treat! This was the series that first sparked my interest in reading. I picked up *Dragon's Blood* way back in my middle school days and I was instantly sold after the first few chapters. I fell in love with the rich world and amazing characters. I'm happy to say that all of those things I loved still remain in *Dragon's Heart*.

This continues where *A Sending of Dragons*, book three, left off. For those who haven't read this series yet, I will not spoil it by telling you how it ended. I will say that it was a welcome return to the beautiful setting that is Austar IV. Is it strange that it felt like I was going home, back to where it all started? Yolen, as always, does a wonderful job portraying the lush, or should I say barren, landscape that is Austar IV.

While there were quite a few tragedies in this book, it was not emotional at all for me. I felt some disconnect between myself and the secondary characters. It is probably because I didn't revisit the first three books before jumping into this one. I found myself confused at parts, but that quickly changed as my memory of the previous books returned.

You are in for some surprises with this one! There are deaths that I didn't see coming, connections between characters I would never have guessed in a million years, and new companions. Unfortunately, I feel as

though this book was rushed and anti-climatic... I look back and, though I loved every second I spent reading this, not much actually happened over the course of the book. Most of the loose ends are tied up, but rather than having a feeling of completion, I was left wanting more. I think I was expecting *Dragon's Heart* to be much more epic than it actually was. Regardless, it gets 4 stars from me for the conclusion of an amazing series that I am so sad to see end...

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Kathy Martin says

It was good to get back to Austar IV after many years away. I think I read the previous book in this series in 1987. This one has been sitting on my stack since the beginning of 2010. Thankfully, the book included both an introduction and a preface which did a lot to get me back up to speed on what I missed.

This one begins with Jakkin and Akki escaping from their captivity at the hands of the trogs and returning to the dragon nursery that was their home. But after being gone a year and because of some things they did before they left, they are returning to a world that is very different than the one they left.

The bonders revolted, the senate freed all the bonders, and the Federation has embargoed the planet for not more than fifty years. And Akki and Jakkin have changed beyond measure too. They spent the night in the egg sack of Jakkin's dying dragon to escape the bitter cold of the Dark-After and when they left it they could tolerate the cold and speak mind to mind with each other and with dragons.

Akki is determined to discover how they developed their powers. She wants to find some sort of vaccine that will let others survive the cold and speak mind to mind but without the necessity of killing the female dragons. Jakkin is even more determined to protect the dragons.

Both have harrowing adventures as Akki learns that all the rebels weren't shipped off the prison planets or rehabilitated and Jakkin is recaptured by the trogs who had held them captive.

The story was engaging and entertaining. I was swept into the story even though I barely remembered the first three books. The writing was wonderful. But, what else could one expect from Jane Yolen? Fantasy fans middle grade and up will enjoy this adventure story and will be eagerly searching out the previous three books in the series.
