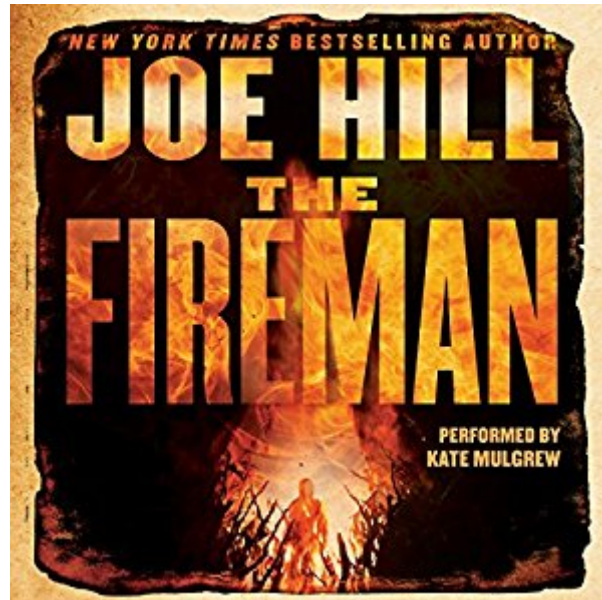


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The Fireman: A Novel



Synopsis

From the award-winning, New York Times best-selling author of NOS4A2 and Heart-Shaped Box comes a chilling novel about a worldwide pandemic of spontaneous combustion that threatens to reduce civilization to ashes and a band of improbable heroes who battle to save it, led by one powerful and enigmatic man known as the Fireman. The fireman is coming. Stay cool. No one knows exactly when it began or where it originated. A terrifying new plague is spreading like wildfire across the country, striking cities one by one: Boston, Detroit, Seattle. The doctors call it Draco Incendia Trychophyton. To everyone else it's Dragonscale, a highly contagious, deadly spore that marks its hosts with beautiful black and gold marks across their bodies - before causing them to burst into flames. Millions are infected; blazes erupt everywhere. There is no antidote. No one is safe. Harper Grayson, a compassionate, dedicated nurse as pragmatic as Mary Poppins, treated hundreds of infected patients before her hospital burned to the ground. Now she's discovered the telltale gold-flecked marks on her skin. When the outbreak first began, she and her husband, Jakob, had made a pact: They would take matters into their own hands if they became infected. To Jakob's dismay, Harper wants to live - at least until the fetus she is carrying comes to term. At the hospital, she witnessed infected mothers give birth to healthy babies and believes hers will be fine, too...if she can live long enough to deliver the child. Convinced that his do-gooding wife has made him sick, Jakob becomes unhinged and eventually abandons her as their placid New England community collapses in terror. The chaos gives rise to ruthless Cremation Squads - armed, self-appointed posses roaming the streets and woods to exterminate those who they believe carry the spore. But Harper isn't as alone as she fears: A mysterious and compelling stranger she briefly met at the hospital, a man in a dirty yellow firefighter's jacket, carrying a hooked iron bar, straddles the abyss between insanity and death. Known as the Fireman, he strolls the ruins of New Hampshire, a madman afflicted with Dragonscale who has learned to control the fire within himself, using it as a shield to protect the hunted...and as a weapon to avenge the wronged. In the desperate season to come, as the world burns out of control, Harper must learn the Fireman's secrets before her life - and that of her unborn child - goes up in smoke.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read and review a LOT of books. Very rarely am I lucky enough to read one that figuratively punches me in the gut. I've held off a couple of days from reviewing THE FIREMAN because I wanted to think about the story and the review I was going to do on it. I LOVED THIS BOOK! I was lucky enough to get an Advanced Reading Copy of it but I have already pre-ordered a hardcover for my library. I actually might order two - one to keep in pristine condition on my library shelf and another that I already plan on re-reading over and over. And that, in itself, is rare. I read so many books that hardly ever do I re-read one. My favorite genre of books is horror and even more appealing to me is the sub-genre of post-apocalyptic/dystopian books. So I knew I was probably going to like this tale. Plus I've read Joe Hill's other books (except for his graphic novels) and I enjoyed them. But this is a post-apocalyptic book that I loved as much as ANY I've ever read. And Joe Hill has taken a giant leap forward with his writing prowess. - I loved the characters. Harper, the nurse who models herself off of Mary Poppins, and John, the Fireman, are my favorites but author Hill brings the whole incredible cast of characters to life on these pages - from the innocent to the maniacal. The most important "character" is Draco incendia trychophyton, or Dragonscale - wildly imaginative and deadly. - Most of the story takes place in New Hampshire and I could visualize the settings clearly. - The storyline - I'm not going into any detail on the story. Everyone that reads or listens to this book should experience it firsthand with no spoilers.

When I finished reading NOS4A2 a few years ago, I was incredibly eager to see what Joe Hill would produce next. That prior novel was my first experience with Hill's work, although I have his other works in my possession and sadly unread, and it shot its way onto my list of all-time favorites. Hill immediately became a must-read author for me, I was that damn impressed. The Fireman is a completely different work than NOS4A2, one that stands tall on its own and proves that Hill is, or at least should be, on his way to becoming a household name. In The Fireman, Hill brings us into a

fiery apocalypse as humanity finds itself stricken by a disease dubbed Dragonscale. Those infected are prone to sudden immolation, and as the disease spreads and panic rises, things get hot in a hurry. Among those afflicted is Nurse Harper Willowes, newly pregnant and whose relationship with her husband, Jacob, has hit a snag due to her infection and his burgeoning psychosis. With the help of the titular fireman, she's able to flee Jacob and find safety at Camp Wyndham, a makeshift commune for the survivors of Dragonscale. I won't say much more about this book or its occurrences, and hopefully I haven't said too much already. The Fireman is a big book, a door-stopper epic, but one that never feels overburdened by its page count. It probably could have been made a tad bit shorter, but when the reading is as good and smooth as this, I shall never complain about getting extra pages to lose myself in. One of the most powerful aspects of this book are the characters themselves, and Hill really lets each of them shine brightly.

[NOTE: I received a copy of this book through Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.] I don't really know what happened. I guess for now, I'm not with the majority of readers? I thought I'd enjoy this novel much more than I did, and well, I didn't dislike it, but I didn't care much about it either. The fact it took me one month to finish it, even though it's not a complicated book (we're not talking hard non-fiction university topics here), is proof enough, I guess? The basic idea was good. Although I found the science behind the Dragonscale is a bit wishy-washy, in itself, it could have worked if the plot had been more enthralling? It started well enough, with a potential (and loathsome) antagonist almost straight off the bat, and a main character, Harper, who's a bit of a pushover, but with room to evolve and overall positive features. The story introduced harsh themes, too: for instance, Harper and Jakob had that "contract" that if they were to get infected, they'd die together peacefully, before the Dragonscale burnt them to a crip like it did for all the other infected people. Except that Harper finds out she's pregnant and infected almost at the same time, and suddenly the choice isn't so easy anymore "she wants to live, for herself as much as for the baby. Jakob doesn't agree so much, and that's where the first batch of crap hits the fan. The story follows Harper during her pregnancy, as she tries to figure out how to go on, how to survive, who she can entrust her child with once they're born. As her path crosses with that of the Fireman's, she finds herself involved with other infected people, and realises that there's so much more to Dragonscale than meet the eye. And from then on, my interest gradually dwindled.

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