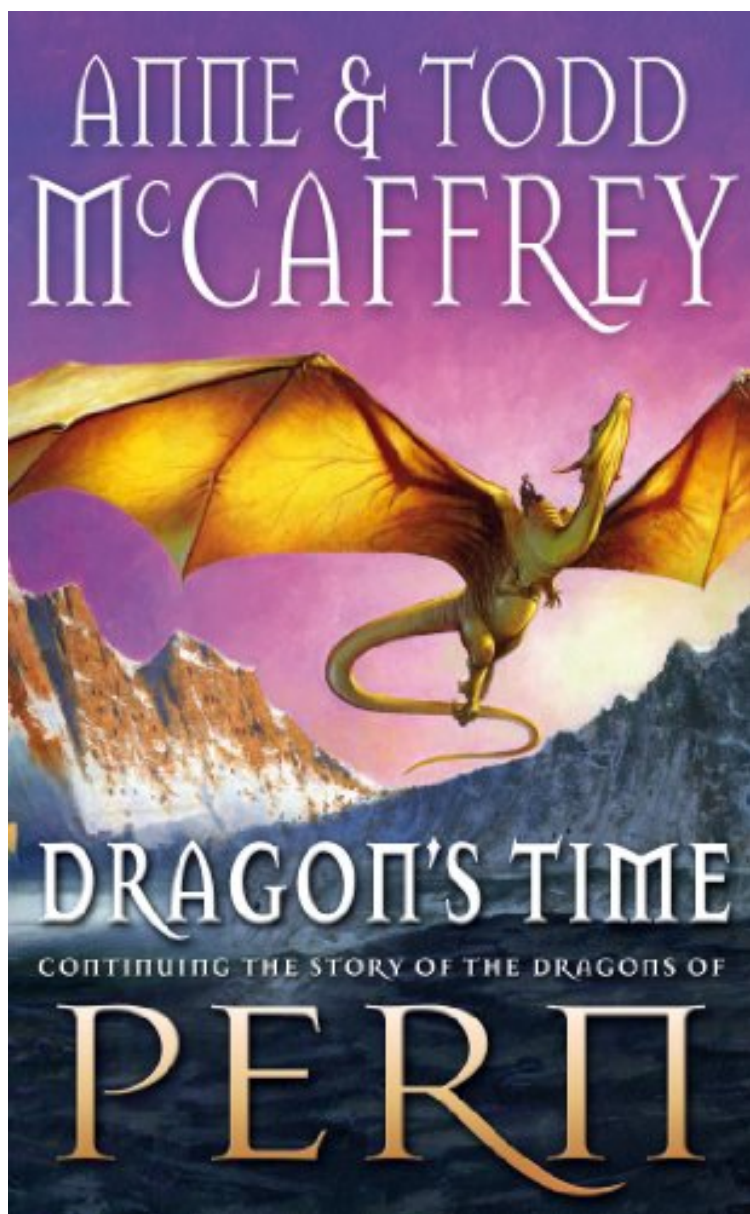


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## Dragon's Time



*Par Anne McCaffrey, Todd McCaffrey  
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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAlthough Lorana cured the dragons' sickness so many died from the disease that there are no longer enough dragons to fight the deadly Thread, and more dragons and their riders die each Threadfall. With their numbers dwindling, Lorana made the decision to fly forward in time in a desperate bid to bring dragons from the future to fight Thread. She knew that jumping so far in time would result in her losing her baby, but without her jump all life on Pern is doomed. Back at Telgar Weyr Fiona, Kindan and T'mar realise what Lorana has done. They are desperately sad, but two things give them hope. The first is that Fiona is expecting twins, and the second the fact that all the dragonriders are exhausted, a sign that they

are Timing it - existing elsewhere in space and time - which gives them hope that Lorana has found a way through time to help them. Sure enough, led by messages left for them by Lorana, they fly through space to the Dawn Sisters, the ships hanging in space that brought their ancestors to Pern. From there they look down at the beautiful planet and see a previously undiscovered continent - this is where they are Timing it and where they are reunited with Lorana. Now they can increase the number and strength of the dragons before going back to their own time to fight Thread. Although Lorana found she couldn't break time, she has found a way to cheat it.

Extrait ONE The way forward is dark and long. A dragon gold is only the first price you'll pay for Pern. Cold. Black. Silent. Deadly. Between. That strange nothingness where dragons can go that can only be described as between one place and another. Between only lasts as long as it takes to cough three times. For a short journey, yes. For a journey from one place to another, anywhere on Pern--yes, three coughs is enough. But when traveling between one time and another--it takes longer. A cold, silent, freezing longer that saps life. Lorana felt nothing, not the warmth of the queen dragon beneath her, not even the tiny, tender presence that warmed her womb. Im sorry! Lorana cried, her hand going to her belly. There was no other way! No response. Pern was dying, there were too few dragons and riders to protect it from Thread.

Slowly, steadily, inexorably, the protection of Pern was being eroded, was dying out. The dragonriders, including Weyrleader Tmar, Weyrwoman Fiona, and all the Weyrleaders of the four other Weys, had tried their best, had developed new tactics, had kept adapting, kept striving, kept searching for some way out of their trap. But the problem was that there were too few dragons, less than a third the number required, and more were being lost each Fall. The dragons numbers were so few because of the strange sickness that had come upon them just before the start of this new Pass of the Red Star. Lorana, with Kindans stout aid, had succeeded in finding help from the distant past and that help had led them to a cure for the sickness. In the meantime, however, too many dragons had succumbed to the sickness--and more to Thread--leaving too few dragons to protect the planet. In desperation, because no one could conceive of getting further help from the past, Lorana had decided to jump forward in time, to jump ahead to a time after the Third Pass and beg for aid from the future. She was the only one with a sure sense of time and place--a gift, she thought, from her special link with all the dragons of Pern--and only she could make the journey forward to such an unknown, unseen time. She used the Red Star to guide her, picturing it and the stars in their stations where they would be fifty Turns from her present. Using her gift came at a price, however. A jump of this length would be a terrible strain on her and gold Minith. But it would be fatal to the life stirring inside her. Lorana wailed silently. Go back! she urged herself. Go back before its too late. I cant, she decided a moment later. Its too late. Im all alone. Im here! Minith called to her feebly, her touch full of support. You are not alone. Lorana made no reply. She knew she couldnt explain herself to the gold dragon, to a queen who laid eggs. Everything Ive loved, Ive lost, Lorana thought to herself, letting her hand slip, unfelt, unfeeling, from her belly. Ive lost my own queen, my beloved fire-lizards, and now... She couldnt finish the thought. Tears froze on her cheeks, her heart beat at a slow, glacial pace, as the cold of between sapped her strength, her life. And stilled the life of the other inside her. A dragon gold is only the first price... The cold between gripped her and she knew no more. Lorana closed her eyes in a spasm of pain. She was in a bed, in a nightgown. Fearful, her hands went to her belly--it was flat, lifeless. You lost the baby, a voice said. It was old, hoarse with age, but somehow familiar. But you knew that. You planned on it. Tullea. Bendens Weyrwoman, Miniths rightful rider. Minith? Lorana called. I am here, the queen responded quickly. There was no echo to her voice: no sign that an older Minith--a Minith of this future time--had heard her call. Dont, Tullea warned harshly. You are still too weak. I wasnt sure that you wanted to live yourself. She paused for a moment, then added, Perhaps you didnt, really. Where am I? Is the Pass over? Lorana asked, her eyes still closed. Her mouth was dry; her voice was slurred and felt awkward. The Pass is over, Tullea affirmed. That much Ill tell you and no more. Help? Lorana said. She realized that word wasnt enough and, after another breath, asked, Will you send help? Dragons from the future? Tullea said. Simple, quick, efficient! Oh, yes, no worries for those left behind. She snorted and added viciously, Oh, no! No, dragon-stealer, you wont find any dragons in the future. None? Lorana opened her eyes only to find the room completely dark. None for you, Tullea snapped back. You were always meddling when you should have left things alone. Wheres Bnik? Lorana asked. Wheres his jacket? Tullea retorted. She barked a bitter laugh. Between, thats where! Where you left it! Lorana wondered for a moment if the old queen rider had gone insane. Where you must go, now! Tullea went on, and Lorana gasped as, abruptly, the blankets were pulled off her. Get up, your things are over there! But--I want to talk--Youve talked enough! Tullea snapped, grabbing Loranas hand and feebly pulling on it. Youre well enough to travel; its time--long time--you were gone. Tullea seemed to think her

last comment funny and let out another bitter laugh. The faintest of glows, smaller than any Lorana had ever seen, was turned. It provided only a dim light, which revealed bare stone walls, the rude blanket thrown over her, and the rough, reed bed beneath her. And Tullea--old, bent, white-haired, almost unrecognizable. Take my dragon with you, dragon-stealer! Tullea said, throwing clothes toward her. Cant I talk to anyone? What makes you think theres anyone to talk to? Tullea asked sharply. Lorana started to answer, then stretched her senses, searching for someone, for a dragon or even a watch-wher, but--Slap! Her cheek was suddenly aflame with stinging pain. Dont do that! Tullea barked. Dont make me remember! She shoved Lorana. Get dressed, get going! Now! Shocked and depressed, Lorana wordlessly slipped back into her riding clothes. Her undergarments were unwashed; they smelled of sweat and the fear shed felt when shed made this journey to the future. So far. Shed come so far. Shed given so much. Get moving! Tullea hustled her along. Time enough to think later. Please, we need help, Lorana said even as Tullea nudged her. They walked down a slope on a cloudy, starless night. She heard more then saw Minith in the distance. Youll have to fly high and south to get above the clouds and see the Red Star, Tullea told her as she tried to push Lorana up onto the gold dragon. Be quick about it! I want to have as much time with my dragon as I can! Lorana found herself perched on Minith, wondering if the poor gold queen had been wearing the riding harness the whole time Lorana had been a babbling wreck in bed. Had she even been fed? Of course she was fed! Tullea declared irritably. Now, go! Go back where you belong! She barked another dry laugh. The Red Star will guide you, just as it did when you came here! Without another word, Tullea turned away, heading back up toward the cave from which theyd emerged. Lorana watched her in the dim light, frowning. Wasnt there anything she could do? Go! Tullea wailed. Come on, Minith, lets go, Lorana said sadly to the queen. In a moment they were airborne, climbing toward the clouds. As they rose higher, the clouds thinned and she could see the Red Star faintly through the breaks. She brought the image of Red Butte into her mind with stars, moons, and the Red Star to mark the time, thankful for the very small favor of Tulleas, and gave Minith the coordinates. All this way, she thought to herself as they entered the cold of between. Involuntarily her hands went to her belly. Her cold, flat, lifeless belly. All for nothing! Tullea turned back when she heard the sound of Minith going between. Her shoulders slumped and she let out a deep, regretful sigh. Minith, tell her its done, Tullea thought, stretching her mind into between in the special way shed been taught. A moment later the air was full of the sound of dragon wings. A pale yellow specter, a ghost of the young fertile queen whod been here just moments before, landed daintily in front of her with the grace of long years. Beside her, another queen landed. And another. Stay there! Tullea called up to the two queen riders. I want to get back to the Weyr and feel some warmth in my bones. How did she take it? the older of the two riders asked, her face bleak with sorrow. Just like you said she would, Tullea snapped waspishly. For a moment her habitual mask slipped and she asked, Why couldnt I have told her? Why did I have to be a monster to her? Because thats what she said, the woman replied. Her hair was mostly white with only a few streaks of blond left in it, but her eyes were still the sea green blue theyd always been. She said that you were horrible to her, gave her not one moments kindness. She paused and added, Nor one clue. So shell never know, Tullea mused to herself. She never found out. No, Fiona replied sadly. She never had a chance to learn how youd changed. She smiled at the older woman. But I did. Tullea snorted in disbelief. Why do you think I insisted on that glow? Fiona asked. Because Lorana said thats what there was, Tullea said. Because if thered been more light, she would have seen your face clearly, Fiona told her. So? Tullea barked. Its old, its creased. Her tone changed as the feeble spark of anger in her dimmed. Ive lived a long life; Im ready for my rest. We go back to the Weyr, I say my farewells, and you keep your part of the bargain. Of course, Fiona agreed. Tullea mounted, moving slowly with care for her old bones even as she cursed her age. It was time, she thought to herself. Shed seen enough, lived enough. It was time. Before she urged Minith back to the Weyr, she turned to Fiona. What about the light? The lines in your face, Fiona said by way of explanation. Theyre not lines of sorrow. If shed seen them, shed have known. Oh, Tullea replied. Her face grew brighter and she shot the younger woman a smile as she added more emphatically, Oh! It was only when they were back in the Weyr, when Fiona was helping Tullea down off the aged Minith, that the older Weyrwoman had time again to think of what shed done. Will you ever tell her? she asked without hope. About you? Fiona asked sadly. At the old womans nod, she shook her head. No, I never knew. Never knew until it was too late. Pity, Tullea said. She glanced toward the clouds and the night sky, which threatened rain later. I would have liked for her to know. She snorted. Its the least I could do, for all that shes done. Above them, the sky was torn open as wing after wing of dragons appeared overhead and spiraled down gracefully into the Weyr below. Dont tell him at least, Tullea pleaded as she glanced upward at the returning dragons, with Bendens Weyrleader in the vanguard. That his mother

was here tonight? Fiona asked, looking over toward the Benden Weyrleader. Or how surprised shed be to know that hes partnered with your daughter?A streak of light burst from the Dining Cavern and a young form raced into sight, stopping with sudden concern for Tulleas old bones.The dark-haired little boy looked up at Tullea and she knelt down.Im too old to pick you up, you know, she said as she drew him into a great hug. I think Ill miss you most of all.The boy looked at her in confusion, his dark brown eyes were deep and thoughtful, slanted just slightly and shrouded by the thick dark hair that made him the near-twin of his great-grandmother.Hed be proud, you know, Fiona spoke up quietly from Tulleas side, with a brief tilt of her head toward Bendens Weyrleader.Ill have to be proud enough for all of them, Tullea replied, her eyes spangled with tears.Again Lorana was numb, voiceless, shocked by the length of the cold between. She had followed Tulleas image blindly, and so it came as a shock to realize that she and Minith seemed to be between for even longer than on their jump forward. Where was Tullea sending her?Suddenly, as if in a clear instant, Lorana froze, thinking that she heard voices. She strained her senses, reached out, and caught--panic, fear, despair!A mans voice cried out. And a womans, too. Fiona?Lorana started to worry that she had jumped blindly between forever, like Dgan and the Telgar riders, and that perhaps she was hearing Fionas voice calling for her. She tried to reach out, to touch Fiona, to find her and then--She burst forth into a cold night sky. It felt as cold as between, and as dark--except she could see a spattering of stars in the sky and a small light below.She realized suddenly where she was--she had drawn a picture of it once long ago--Red Butte, the massive uprising of rock in the center of the Keroon Plains. Minith, without urging, began a slow, steady spiral down toward the light.It was a campfire, warm and inviting. Lorana saw one figure rise from beside it before exhaustion overtook her once more and even that small light went dark.The soup is warm, you should sip it slowly, a young mans voice said. A hand covered her eyes briefly as he added quickly, Dont open your eyes until youve sat up, or youll stare straight into the sun!Lorana was lying on the ground, its rock-hardness eased by a layer of soft cushions, perhaps a pile of reeds. She sat up slowly and opened her eyes.An earnest young man smiled at her, proffering a steaming bowl of soup.Thirsty, cold, and fatigued, Lorana took the bowl and drank a quick, small sip.Its good! she said, taking a longer drink.Finish it, Ill get more, the young man offered, pointing at a large cauldron resting on the side of a neat ring of rocks.Lorana gladly complied.

At the mans gesture, she handed him the bowl and he scooted over to the cauldron to dip out another serving. He coughed once and shook his head with a frown.Revue de presse"SF grand master McCaffrey and her son Todd combine their prodigious storytelling talents to craft a complex tale of desperation and sacrifice, love and loss" (Library Journal (starred review))