

# **Dragon's Blood: The Pit Dragon Chronicles, Volume One Study Guide**

**Dragon's Blood: The Pit Dragon Chronicles, Volume One by Jane Yolen**

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# Plot Summary

Dragon's Blood, the opening book of the Pit Dragon Trilogy by Jane Yolen, is the story of a young bondar named Jakkin Stewart, who has a dream of becoming a dragon trainer. It is a story of love, slavery, compassion, fierce loyalty, and a young man's drive to be free.

Jakkin Stewart was born free, but after the death of his father, his mother sold them both into bondage for survival. After she too died, Jakkin was left on his own at Sarkkhan's nursery, where he helps care for the Master's dragons. Jakkin, however, is good with the creatures, and dreams of stealing an egg to hatch, so he can train his own dragon to fight in the pits, thereby earning his way out of bondage. After cultivating a piece of ground far into the harsh landscape around the nursery, Jakkin plans his theft, only to have the local man in charge of the bondars, drug addict Likkarn, spoil his plan by hurting him while taking down a wayward dragon. After a week in the hospital, Jakkin returns to the nursery, only to find the eggs already hatched. On finding a miscount of hatchlings, however, Jakkin steals a baby dragon and takes it to his shelter. Training by night and working by day, Jakkin builds a close bond with the dragon, who turns out to be a fierce, blood red fighter. Jakkin fears for their safety from Drakks, or local birds who kill dragon hatchlings, but with help from other bondars and his new friend, Akki, he helps the dragon grow and learn. As he and Akki grow closer, he finds his feelings for her mingled with question about her unmentioned past. Akki, who was born free, can also read, and together she and Jakkin learn about fighting dragons and raising them to fight more productively.

A year later, Akki arranges for Jakkin's first fight with his dragon at a nearby minor pit. When he arrives, however, he finds that Sarkkhan, his master, is fighting that day, as well. After a nearly perfect beginning fight, Jakkin is found directing his dragon telepathically from the pits by Likkarn. His dragon nearly loses when Jakkin loses his concentration, but he pulls himself together in time, allowing his dragon to win the match, although Jakkin is shocked to learn the animal is mute. All seems well, but Lakkarn warns that the dragon is about to kill his opponent, which would render him unusable in a fighting arena. Jakkin pulls the dragon back just in time. Back in the stable however, Jakkin is furious when Lakkarn pushes him aside in a weed haze, intending to care for its wounds. Jakkin protests, but is stopped by none other than Sarkkhan, his master. Sarkkhan reveals he has been watching Jakkin raise and train the dragon, and that he intentionally bred the dragon a mute, so he would not give anything away in a fight through roars. Sarkkhan also reveals he has had Lakkarn watching Jakkin, and that he bet money on Jakkin to win. Jakkin also learns Sarkkhan, too, stole dragons to earn his way out of bondage, that it was Lakkarn who taught him to be a trainer and a breeder, and that Akki is, in fact, Sarkkhan's daughter. Jakkin and Sarkkhan agree on terms of his bondage release, and Sarkkhan is promised his choice of the dragon's second litter, as Jakkin learns for the first time that his dragon is a female. Back at the nursery, Jakkin still works to pay for food and housing for his dragon, but he is free. Akki, however, decides to leave, as she hates her father, and refuses to take his care or

his money. Jakkin stays, hoping he can one day earn enough to win the heart of Akki and have her take him as her man.



# Introduction - Chapter 3

## Introduction - Chapter 3 Summary

Dragon's Blood is the story of a young man's journey to adulthood as he fulfills his dream to become a free man as a dragon trainer. Jakkin Stewart is a boy who will stop at nothing to earn his way out of bondage, but who must learn much about life on his journey. This novel is a study of the bond between man and beast, as well as an examination of how personal responsibility and the consequences of one's actions affect their lives.

In the Introduction, the planet of Astar IV is discussed as a desolate, ex-prison planet with an arid climate that is conducive only to the raising of dragons. It is a planet of Masters and bonders, who are slaves, working for their freedom on dragon breeding and training farms.

In chapter one, Jakkin waits outside the dragonry, listening as the hatchlings make sounds inside their eggs, waiting to hatch. He longs not to be a bonder, or slave, any longer, and plans on stealing an egg from the incubarn the following evening, in an effort to raise and train his own fighting dragon for money to fill his bond bag. Satisfied the hatching is coming along, Jakkin travels to a place in the desert he has cultivated for his dragon, making sure he sweeps away his footsteps. He fears stealing an egg without a dragon inside, as his skills are as a trainer, like his father, who died at the claws of a feral dragon. His mother sold them into bondage and died within a month. He thinks about how great it will be to raise a champion fighter as he reaches the oasis, a large area in the middle of the arid desert with a warm spring, where Jakkin has made a man-made pool. He has gone there for years on his days off, while other bonders have gone to the baggeries, or prostitution houses, and the pits, or gaming arenas. He has grown a patch of blisterweed and burnwort, foods for dragons, and knows he has the right tools to raise the creature. Jakkin returns to the nursery to avoid Dark After.

Chapter two finds Jakkin asleep in the bondhouse, being woken by his friends Slakk and Errikkin, two other bonders, as they give him a hard time about where he goes every night so late. At breakfast, the bond boys and small table of girls intermix with older bonders and the few free men who work at the nursery. Jakkin notes that Akkhina, a beautiful black-haired girl, works at the nursery instead of the baggeries, but sits at the free table. The bonders eat with full silverware, as their Master, Sarkkhan is kind, and fights rarely occur. The boys talk about their tasks for the day, and Jakkin offers to take Blood Brother, the dragon, for his bath, relieving Slakk, as he is less capable with the dragons. The boys quietly make fun of Likkarn, the old bonder who is in charge of the young bond boys. Born free, Likkarn can read and write, and is thus in charge of the daily task lists. Jakkin, too, can read, but cannot write, although he knows Likkarn hates him for it. Likkarn, Jakkin notes, is a weeder. The boys head to the stud barn where the male dragons are kept, as their duties for the day include bathing and cleaning out the stalls of the creatures. Slakk and Errikkin discuss what they will do after they buy out of



their bonds as they listen to the roars of Blood Brother, a tremendous dragon who, after two wonderful fights, refused to fight again.

In chapter three, Jakkin enters Blood Brother's stall, and immediately begins to calm the dragon expertly. He leads him to the baths while the other boys clean out the stall. Although the dragon is momentarily annoyed as they near the baths, the cool mud dampens his temper immediately. After a scrubbing, the dragon and Jakkin both fall asleep. Rising, Jakkin leads the dragon to the showers, where he patiently grooms the scales and shines them properly. Jakkin notes he is not deep blood red, which is best for fighting, but that his color is rich. He hums and sings to the dragon as he works, who responds with a deep thrumming. Jakkin tries to reach the mind of the creature as good trainers can do, but received only a deep red muddy brooding. Thanking Jakkin for the grooming, the animal attempts to groom him back, leaving long red scratches. Jakkin returns Brother to his stall, limping from the wound, and remembers he left the brush in the shower. Slakk offers to go get it, knowing he can take his time and end up with less work.

## Introduction - Chapter 3 Analysis

The introduction to the novel is short, but does provide useful information about the planet, the climate, and the history of the dragons. These pieces of information help to set the stage of the story, and help acclimate the reader to the setting. Without this introduction, the user would be less able to immediately dive into the novel's storyline.

Chapter one gives the reader much information about Jakkin, as well as about topics listed throughout the story. The history of Jakkin's family is important, as it explains why he is in bondage, why he knows how to train dragons, and why he has no parents. It also explains Jakkin's hopes and dreams about becoming a free man. This section also explains the work Jakkin has put into his oasis, which shows his deep passion for the project. Finally, this section explains the baggeries, bond bags, the pits, and Dark After, all of which are mentioned and used as part of the plot throughout the story. Even from this first section, the reader is given ample reasons to feel pity for Jakkin while still understanding that he himself feels no self pity, but uses his experiences to drive him forward.

Chapter two further introduces several characters in the story. It is here readers first meet Slakk and Errikkin, Jakkin's friends who, while plying a minor role in the story, do help to frame several situations later. The bond hierarchy is also explained here, as is the Master, Sarkkhan. Akki is introduced here as well, although only in thought. Likkarn, the cruel weeder in charge of the bonders, is first seen here as well, and it is clear from the beginning that he and Jakkin will have conflict throughout the novel. The fact that Likkarn takes great pride in his ability to read and write, and that Jakkin can also read, shows clearly there will be conflict between these characters. Finally, the agreement between Slakk and Jakkin foreshadows the situation in the next chapter where again Slakk shows he cares only for himself.



Chapter three opens by showing Jakkin's true ability with dragons as he calms the most ferocious beasts. It is clear that Jakkin has a knack with the creatures, foreshadowing his ability to train his own dragon. In addition, this section discusses the color scheme of dragons, which is used later in the novel when Jakkin's own dragon begins to change color. His revelations about being able to telepathically link to dragons foreshadows his own link later in the novel with his dragon, and his leaving of the brush, combined with the knowledge of Likkarn's rough handling of the bond boys, foreshadows his problems in the next chapter. Finally, Slakk's offer to retrieve the brush to avoid work shows again his care only for himself.



# Chapter 4 - Chapter 5

## Chapter 4 - Chapter 5 Summary

In chapter four, Slakk is caught retrieving the brush from the showers by Likkarn, who, when smoking blisterweed, is uncontrollably violent. Likkarn controls the boys with fear and pain, however, even during the day when he refrains from the weed. Slakk sells out Jakkin, and Likkarn immediately sets out to find and punish him. The dragons, sensing Likkarn's anger, begin to respond with emotion, becoming restless. Jakkin runs from the stall, knowing he is in danger and that he must use a stun gun to knock out the creature, but he runs into Likkarn on the way. Likkarn hits Jakkin with the bath brush as he yells at him. The dragon responds, kicking fiercely, pushing Jakkin into Likkarn. Blood Brother steps on Jakkin as he leaves the stall, and angrily walks down the hall, catching an old wound on a hook. Pulling free, blood flies on Jakkin, who is unconscious, causing deep burns. Likkarn runs to a near stun gun, and instead of setting it to stun, sets it to kill. Aiming at the dragon, he shoots and kills him, admonishing the dead beast that he had bet all his money on his third fight, which the dragon refused to participate in. Likkarn tells the dead beast he ruined him, and kicks him, shaking violently with weed hunger. He orders Brother to the stews and orders help for Jakkin as he himself returns to the bond house.

In chapter five, Jakkin awakens in the hospital, being cared for by Akki. After some gentle teasing, Akki leaves to nurse other patients. Knowing he must hurry to reach an egg before it hatches, he painfully dresses and reaches the door, only to find Dark After is near. He reopens a wound accidentally and crumbles to the floor. When he wakes again, Akki chides him for leaving his bed and tells him that Likkarn even stayed in bed three days until Sarkkhan came in and broke him back to stallboy. Jakkin asks and is told he has been in the hospital for a week. Breaking down, Jakkin sobs for the first time in his life as Akki soothes him, telling him it is the result of the medication. When Jakkin wakes again, moving is easier, and he leaves the hospital. He thinks of his few memories of life before bond, of his father, bleeding in the desert, and of his mother, telling them that they filled their bags themselves. Jakkin finds his friends in the barn, and although Slakk claims not to be responsible for Jakkin's near death, he has difficulty looking at Jakkin. Errikkin and Slakk tell Jakkin of Likkarn and Sarkkhan's fight. Likkarn, in blister fury, attacked Sarkkhan after an argument about whether his shot to the dragon was on purpose. Sarkkhan, calmly, apologized for having to break him, but took his gold, and made him a stall boy. The boys give Jakkin a hard time about Akki being his full time nurse, and Errikkin sends him back to bed, knowing he is no shape to work. Jakkin cautiously asks how the hatching went, and Errikkin indicates it went well. Jakkin leaves, knowing he has missed his chance for an egg.





## Chapter 4 - Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter four begins by showing the true color of Slakk, in terms of his loyalty to his friends as he not only gives up Jakkin, but does so without revealing his own role in the problem. Additionally, this chapter shows Likkarn in his truest form, as well, as he both physically and verbally abuses Jakkin. Likkarn clearly cares little for the boys, or the dragons, as he is so intent on breaking Jakkin that he neglects to notice the response from the animals. In truth, it is Likkarn that causes Blood Brother's reaction, and it is Likkarn that causes Brother to react violently. It is when Likkarn kills Brother, however, that readers see his true reasons. His loss of money on the animal's last fight is what he credits as the reason he is still in bond. It is no wonder, then, that he uses this opportunity to put the animal down. His reaction at the end of this chapter, in his weed hunger, shows his true addiction to the drug, and foreshadows events later when Sarkkhan breaks him for his actions. Finally, this chapter again shows Jakkin's true skill with dragons, as his expertise allows him to escape death.

Chapter five adds depth to Jakkin's character. Jakkin, confused, drugged, and in pain, believes he must get up to steal an egg. In spite of his problems, Jakkin painfully rises, showing again his dedication to his plan. It is only when he realizes he will freeze to death in Dark After that he allows himself to falter. Jakkin's breakdown, the first in his life, shows how torn he is about his lost opportunity and his determination, in spite of his condition, shows his inability to let go of his dream. His memories of his parents, both grim, lend to the pity the reader already feels for Jakkin. Further, the information about his mother's determination that the two fill their bags themselves show where Jakkin gets his determination.

In addition, this chapter allows the reader a little more information about Akki, the young nurse caring for Jakkin, and Slakk. Akki is clearly a caring young woman who knows how to give support to the ill. Her bedside manner is one of calmness and support, and her genuine humor allows the patient, in this case Jakkin, to feel a little more at ease. However, it is equally clear that Jakkin is attracted to Akki, suggesting a future relationship between these two characters. Slakk, on the other hand, shows himself again to care only for himself as he refuses to take any blame for what happened to Jakkin.

Finally, this chapter serves to explain what has happened to Likkarn. Knowing, from previous chapters, that Likkarn dislikes Jakkin, it is easy to assume that this dislike has now turned to hatred, since Likkarn has been broken to stall boy as a result of his actions. It is clear that Sarkkhan cares for Likkarn, based on what he says, but also clear that Sarkkhan knows he can place little trust in someone who is a weeder. This section allows the reader to understand that Sarkkhan and Likkarn have a close relationship, and foreshadows information about that relationship that is discussed in later chapters.



## Chapter 6 - Chapter 8

### Chapter 6 - Chapter 8 Summary

In chapter six, Jakkin finds himself starving, and so goes to see cook Kkarina in the kitchens. Kkarina happily feeds the young boy the takk she is cooking, as well as giving him several slabs of lizard meat. He notices Kkarina wears no bag, and she reveals she is not a bond woman, but is free. She worked in the baggeries until she could buy her bond, but instead of choosing a life of a master or a master's wife, she chooses to work as a cook, feeding other bonders. She notes that, in the baggeries, she was beautiful, but hated life, whereas now, she is happy, although her beauty has faded. Back in the bunkhouse, Jakkin falls asleep.

In chapter seven, Jakkin wakes to the sounds of the bonders coming in from work. He listens to pick up information, but hears only his friends, kidding about his sleeping, and the older bonders complaining about a lack of water. He does hear, however, that Sarkkhan left Likkarn in a single room, instead of moving him to the bondhouse with the other bonders. Jakkin waits a full half hour before rising, but as he leaves the bondhouse, he sees a drakk, the beast who steals eggs and hatchlings. He knows he will have to tell someone, but also knows everyone will simply think he was sneaking out to meet a girl. Jakkin reaches the barn and looks in the egg room, seeing that all the eggs indeed have hatched. Knowing he should go back to the bunkhouse, Jakkin instead moves to the hen compartment and views the hatchlings. He visits Heart Worm and Heart to Heart, calming them as he speaks to the hatchlings, using phrases such as thou and thee, as all good trainers use. When he reaches Heat O' Mine, he sees on her chart that she has nine hatchlings. He calms the young dragon and her brood, finding she has a wounded hatchling. Jakkin knows such a hatchling will be taken to the stews. However, Jakkin also finds a late hatchling, sitting on the dragon's head. Counting, Jakkin realizes the late dragon was likely not counted in the nest. He picks up the dragon and looks into its eyes, only to see a rainbow of color in his mind in return. Knowing he has found his dragon, Jakkin takes the creature and leaves the barn.

Chapter eight finds Jakkin heading in the darkness toward his shelter with his dragon. Once reached, the dragon investigates as Jakkin thinks about all the work he has yet to do with the little creature. The two playfully banter with one another, and Jakkin is shocked to realize the dragon can already fly. Jakkin thinks about the dragon's first time in the pits, and how it will roar when it is first bloodied, showing the betters it is a true fighter. Happily, the two fall asleep next to one another. When he wakes, however, Jakkin realizes it is nearly Dark After. After leaving his shirt wrapped around the dragon, who will not suffer from the cold, Jakkin heads at a run back to the nursery, but the cold makes his movements slowed. Cold and confused, Jakkin falls against a wall, only to be grabbed by a pair of hands and yanked indoors. He hears Slakk and Errikkin ask why Akki is in the male bondhouse, and she reveals she is bringing home a body. Opening his eyes, he sees Akki wink at him as he tells the boys she saw him coming home from the baggeries, so brought him in.



## Chapter 6 - Chapter 8 Analysis

Chapter six reveals information about Kkarina, and about women in general in the novel, as well as introduces several areas that are used later in the novel. Kkarina is a happy person, but her revelations that she was not always so happy give the reader insight into the lives of women on Austar. Basically, Kkarina notes that pretty women are expected to serve their time in the baggeries, and when they are done, to become the wives of masters, or masters themselves. Kkarina, however, chose a different path, in that she prefers to work, and to not be a slave to anyone. Her attitude is similar to that of Akki, as is discussed later in the novel. Additionally, in this chapter, the reader learns about the generators used to keep the kitchen's cool, as well as learn about the layout of the kitchen, which is important in later chapters when Jakkin has to steal a knife.

Chapter seven reveals more about Jakkin's character and opens the plotline for the rest of the novel. Not to be deterred, Jakkin again shows initiative by forcing himself out of bed in the dead of night to make sure, for himself, that there are no more eggs in the dragonry. This again shows his pure determination to obtain his dream. On the other hand, Jakkin's note that he will have to tell someone about the drakk also shows that Jakkin, unlike Slakk, cares for the dragons, as well as for the nursery, in that he is willing to let on that he was out past dark to save the hatchlings from the drakk. Jakkin's unique ability to read is again shown in this chapter as he uses this ability to gain access to an uncounted dragon, and the dragon's response to him, with the light in his mind, is a clear indicator that Jakkin has a strong connection to this dragon. His taking of it shows perhaps a bad judgment, but it also shows his determination. His comments at the end of the chapter as he soothes the mother show he does care and that he is committed to doing what is right by his dragon.

In chapter eight, readers can already see a strong bond forming between the young dragon and his master. Jakkin's use of the words thee and thou shows his level of commitment, and shows again his knowledge of dragons, and their trainers. His realization about the amount of work he has yet to do only serves to remind the reader that Jakkin does, in fact, understand the responsibility he has taken on. Jakkin's thoughts about the first roar of the dragon foreshadow the later revelation that this dragon was actually bred a mute, but his plans for the future with the dragon again show his commitment and resolve. On the other hand, his falling asleep and his near death during Dark After show again he is still a boy who does not think through things as well as he should. The saving of Jakkin, yet again by Akki, when combined with her winks and comments, foreshadow her budding relationship with Jakkin, as well as her knowledge of his oasis, and his dragon.



## Chapter 9 - Chapter 10

### Chapter 9 - Chapter 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Jakkin and his friends are at breakfast when the boys begin to give Jakkin a hard time about his evening out. Jakkin is a good sport, but when Slakk accuses him of being with Akki, Jakkin angrily refutes the charge and storms off. Once outside, however, he realizes he must return, in order to tell the bond men about the drakk. Returning to the bondhouse, Jakkin tells Lakkarn and the others of the creature's flight over the nursery. Lakkarn, clearly still furious with Jakkin, takes the other boys to begin their chores and begins locating boys to go on a hunt for the creature. Jakkin goes with Balakk to chart the flight path of the creature. Balakk finds a patch of trees through his eyeglass and plans to begin the hunt there. He tells of men who fought large drakks, and orders the men to suit up in full leather protection. An hour later, a group of seven, including Jakkin, group together and are given knives. Three stun guns are also brought along, but the men are told to save power, when possible. The men are given masks to help prevent them from becoming disoriented if the drakks are found, as they give off a terrible smell when killed. Knowing Akki may be watching, Jakkin joins the others in their warlike chant as they walk out of the nursery grounds.

In chapter ten, the men arrive at the clump of trees the drakks may be inhabiting. Jakkin is chosen as the one who will climb the trees to ensure there are no drakk nests in the tops. Likkarn begins to make the sounds of the young dragon, hoping to entice an attack, but nothing happens. After shaking the smaller trees, Jakkin begins to climb those too big to simply be shaken. He is frightened at first, but after climbing several without incident, he becomes bolder. He takes a drink of water, and climbs another, only to realize the water is uncomfortable in his tight stomach. Not thinking of the climb, he is startled by the hiss of a drakk above him. He slides down the tree, making sure to attach his mask as the drakk is shot by the men below. When he reaches the ground, Jakkin locates the drakk and, as instructed, kills him by stabbing him repeatedly. The men chop down the tree and kill the young drakks in the nest. The men, tired and smelly, return to the bond houses for showers, although Likkarn is concerned that the male was not found. At dinner, Jakkin plays up his role in the hunt, but neglects to tell them he urinated in his coveralls in fear as he stabbed the already dead drakk. He does reveal he is to get a full share of the bounty offered for the eight drakks, however, and that he has been given a day off for his work. The other accuse him of spending it with Akki, but he knows he will spend it with his dragon.

### Chapter 9 - Chapter 10 Analysis

Chapter nine reminds readers that Jakkin is a responsible character. After being given a hard time by his friends about his supposed interactions with Akki, Jakkin tries to deny the accusations, afraid of what Akki might think, even though other boys often claim, untruthfully, that they have had relations with her. This shows not only that Jakkin cares



for her, but that he understands the value of a reputation. Further, Jakkin's decision to walk inside the bunkhouse even after his angry exit, shows he is responsible, in that he knows a drakk can kill the hatchlings, and he knows he has to report what he saw. It is clear again in this chapter that Likkarn despises Jakkin, even more so now, and that he is inclined not to believe his story of the drakk. However, Jakkin's description of the creature convinces Likkarn, who immediately takes command, even though he has been broken to stall boy. The comments from the older bond men show that although Likkarn is now a weeder, he was once a great man, and he is still highly respected. The stories of men fighting drakks in this chapter serve to show the danger of the beasts, as does the precautions taken to defend against them. The decision to take Jakkin along angers Likkarn, but Jakkin's reaction, a blend of pride and fear, help lend depth to this character. Finally, Jakkin's wonderings if Akki is watching show his deepening interest in the young woman.

The drakk hunt in chapter ten serves a number of purposes. First, Likkarn, as always, shows he is completely in control of the situation, and that he knows all of the tips and tricks he needs to. Secondly, Jakkin's fear as he freezes on the first tree, combined with his lack of attention on the tree that contains the drakk, shows again his depth of character. Jakkin's killing of the drakk is clearly a reaction to his own fear, but the end result is a dead drakk, and Jakkin takes advantage of this fact to brag a little to others. This is not showy, but does show a more human side to Jakkin. The concern on Likkarn's part about the missing male drakk foreshadows his reappearance later in the novel. Finally, the knowledge that Jakkin is to receive a full share of the bounty shows he has passed a rite of passage and helps him toward his goal of being free.



# Chapter 11 - Chapter 13

## Chapter 11 - Chapter 13 Summary

In chapter eleven, Jakkin heads out after dinner for his oasis, making sure he is not followed. He notices the plants are ready for his picking, and as he nears the shelter, he is rewarded by a burst of color in his head, signifying that the dragon has sensed his coming. He trips over the animal as he enters the shelter, since the dragon is twice the size of the previous day. Jakkin entices the young dragon to the warm stream, and after some coaxing, the dragon comes to him, nibbling on his hand. Eventually the creature leaps into the water, and Jakkin knows, based on its abilities, that it has been swimming before. It comes from the water and shakes off, wetting Jakkin, and the two roughhouse once more. After another swim, Jakkin feeds the young dragon from the weeds and watches it as it sleeps peacefully. He again leaves his old shirt with the creature and promises to return the next day with a bowl and knife in order to make a proper meal for the creature. On reaching the bunkhouse, Jakkin falls fast asleep.

In chapter twelve, Jakkin heads to the kitchen to see Kkarina, in order to find a bowl and knife. When she tells him to grab a bowl and have a taste of the takk, he sees his chance, and takes both a bowl and a knife. Kkarina asks to be regaled with the story of the drakk hunt, and Jakkin agrees, although he skips the part where he stabs the dead drakk. Kkarina tells him to eat, and she will make him a lunch, as most men wish to get away from the nursery following their first roundup. Jakkin is taken aback at the mention of men, and wonders if all rites of passages to manhood are full of lies. She gives him food in a basket, to which he adds the bowl, and he heads off as if going to town. Nearing the shelter, the dragon again senses Jakkin and is outside waiting. He sees the dragon is brown and has a moment of disappointment, but knows the first color on a dragon is not the permanent color.

As Jakkin prepares to gather wort leaves, he notices the dragon standing near him and decides to begin training. He both says and thinks to the dragon "good stand". He repeats this until he sees the dragon beginning to tire, and then rewards him with love. Returning to the patch, he chooses some leaves and crushes them, feeding the dragon the juice once more as he teaches him the "come" command. The dragon eats messily, and so Jakkin strips and washes his clothes in the stream. As he is unbalanced, the dragon playfully pushes him into the stream, and Jakkin again uses the opportunity to teach the dragon when to strike. Laying to dry in the sand, Jakkin is reminded that he has much to learn, but that Sarkkhan once said that everything could be learned from a good trainer or a good dragon. Since Jakkin has no trainer to learn from, he knows he must learn from his dragon. Jakkin falls asleep and wakes to his hungry dragon, who he again feeds. Talking, Jakkin notices a puff of smoke coming from the dragon, and knows this is the first sign of a fire within a fighting dragon. He continues to feed the dragon, knowing the weeds are the source of the inner fire, when he suddenly comes upon a footprint too small to be his own. Thinking on who may know of his oasis, he decides it



must be Likkarn and returns to the nursery to see what he can discover about Likkarn's plan.

Chapter thirteen finds Jakkin playing out the scenarios in his mind as to what to do if the print is another bond boy. He can pay off a younger boy and pay half his winnings to the older bond men. He cannot, however, figure out what to do if the spy is Likkarn. As he reaches the incubarn, he hears the hatchlings outside and goes to watch. He notices he cannot locate the crippled hatchling he saw in the pen, and realizes it must have already been culled. He notes that the culling, or the taking of the weak or sick hatchlings for the stews, is a horrible day, as the mewling of the creatures can be well heard as they are put into the trucks. He compares his own dragon to the hatchlings, and can already see his is more advanced, although many in the yard begin to mock fight. He sees his friends, who give him a hard time about Akki again, and he turns to leave, when Errikkin stops him, asking his shyly if, since he will likely become a master first, he would be kind enough to buy Errikkin's bond. Jakkin, stunned, replies only that he never thought of owning bonders once he himself was out of bond. Likkarn comes up behind the boys and forces them back to work.

## Chapter 11 - Chapter 13 Analysis

Chapter eleven serves to deepen the relationship between the dragon and Jakkin, while also showing again that the bond is stronger than most. Jakkin's telepathic link with the animal is unique, and clearly very strong. Further, their play at the oasis shows that the dragon has a deep trust already with Jakkin, which will come into play later in the novel. The dragon, too, shows a level of investigation and a sense of adventure that lends to the idea of a highly talented dragon.

Chapter twelve adds depth again to Jakkin's character. His unwillingness to lie to Kkarina about the hunt shows not only his respect for her, but also his genuine goodness as a person. His theft of the knife is less out of meanness and more out of necessity. Kkarina, too, shows her kindness as she plans Jakkin's lunch. Jakkin's confusion in this chapter about rites of passage also show him to be learning more about the world. Jakkin knows his participation in the hunt was dramatized, but he also recognizes that this seems unimportant to others. He starts to understand here that what others believe makes a man a man is superficial, and it is what a person does that really counts. This chapter also shows Jakkin's training abilities, and the dragon's abilities. Jakkin sees opportunities where they present themselves, unlike others, and uses those opportunities to both learn from and teach his dragon. His attention to Sarkkhan's words show his respect for his master, as well as his understanding that to be a good trainer, one has to learn from others. The dragon, too, shows promise through his ability to learn, as well as through his production of fire. Finally, the footprint Jakkin finds adds a layer of mystery to the plot, and foreshadows the discovery of the print owner later in the novel.

Chapter thirteen shows how much further along Jakkin's dragon is to the rest of the hatchlings. Whereas the other hatchlings are still learning to spar with one another,



Jakkin's has already learned several techniques that will be useful to it in a fight. In addition, this chapter shows again that Jakkin is not a person who thinks of himself before others. When Errikkin asks Jakkin to buy his bond, Jakkin's reply that he never thought of owning bonders shows that he seeks not the power of being a master, but the freedom. Jakkin wants only to work with dragons and to be free of bondage. This does, however, set the stage for Jakkin's purchase of Errikkin's bond later in the novel. Finally, this chapter again shows the level of meanness that Likkarn exudes on a consistent basis.





# Chapter 14 - Chapter 16

## Chapter 14 - Chapter 16 Summary

Jakkin again travels to the oasis after dark in chapter fourteen, and finds the little dragon hungry and playful. As he prepares the meal, he notices shines of red coming through the dragon's coat. As the two swim together later, however, Jakkin is startled to see red slashes through the thoughts of the dragon, and he knows something is amiss. Above them flies the male drakk, searching for the dragon he can smell. Jakkin thinks to the dragon to remain underwater while he himself runs to the shelter. Donning his clothes and the shirt the dragon was using as a blanket, Jakkin takes his knife and bowl outside. Immediately, the drakk turns his attention to Jakkin, as he now smells of dragon. After several dives, Jakkin receives a long slash on his wrist, causing him to cry out. His dragon immediately responds, coming to his aid. As the drakk swoops down again, Jakkin tells the dragon to move aside, and he plunges the knife into the creature. He is immediately knocked unconscious by the smell. The dragon pushes the body away from the shelter and lays next to Jakkin, licking the wound on his arm.

When Jakkin wakes he is in pain, but is surprised to find Akki at the shelter. Suddenly, Jakkin realizes it has been Akki that has been spying on him all along, but she promises not to tell anyone of his secret. Jakkin realizes Akki has used her shirt to bandage his wrist, and is wearing his, which covers little. Akki explains that the wound is already healing, thanks to the dragon's tongue, and that the dragon is outside, kicking sand on the drakk to keep down the smell. As he and Akki rise to leave, he calls out to the dragon, only to be rewarded with an overwhelming burst of color in his head. He asks the dragon to back off a bit, and the colors fade. The two agree they must take back the drakk, as they clearly smell of the dead animal. As they walk slowly back, Jakkin wonders how many men Akki has been with, as it is rumored she is the doctor's woman, or the master's. But Jakkin knows she can read, and therefore is either free, or close to someone free. And yet, he knows, she has rescued him, and followed him, indicating a strong liking for him. Back at the bond house, no one asks where they got the knife to kill the drakk, and Jakkin is allowed to sleep through the morning.

In chapter fifteen, the bonders are allowed to celebrate the killing of the drakks with cake, and Sarkkhan even eats with the bonders to show his thanks. Jakkin realizes Likkarn is missing and feels sympathy for him, realizing he fearlessly led them in the hunt, but that he is too jealous to celebrate with the others. Sarkkhan calls Jakkin to his table, where he gives him gold pieces in thanks for killing the final drakk. When Jakkin mentions quietly that Akki, too, deserves a share, Akki angrily declares she accepts no gold from Sarkkhan. When she leaves and Jakkin attempts to go after her, Sarkkhan warns he should let her go, as she is hard headed, "like her mother". Jakkin is confused, but takes his seat. He finds her later near the bondhouse. She explains that she has told Sarkkhan before that she will never take his gold, and tells Jakkin that no man will fill her bag as there is always a hidden price to pay. She reveals that her mother was a bag girl, and that she died during Akki's birth. The bag girls raised her



until she was twelve, at which time she came to work with the dragons at the nursery. When Jakkin reminds her Sarkkhan is their master, she refutes, noting that no man is her master. Akki wipes her eyes and admonishes herself for her reactions. The two, together, go to the oasis, where they find the dragon, asleep. The two playfully banter with one another, and when the dragon wakes, Akki and it playfully chase one another, ending up in the water. Jakkin joins them, and after a brief swim, the threesome lay on the sand to warm. Akki and Jakkin discuss dragon training, and Akki offers to get Jakkin books on the topic from Sarkkhan's home. Jakkin wonders why she has been in the master's home, but knows not to ask. They feed the dragon, and return to the nursery.

Chapter sixteen finds Akki true to her word as she brings Jakkin several books on dragon training, as well as training suits. Akki also teaches him dragon anatomy. However, their relation is strained, as Akki often heads off by herself, warning Jakkin not to follow her. A season passes, and Jakkin continues to train his dragon, while working days at the nursery. Culling day arrives, and those dragons at the nursery that are less capable are taken away for the stews, under the watchful eye of Likkarn, whose previous night of blister fury left several bruised. That night, Jakkin holds his own dragon tightly. Over the next few weeks, Jakkin weans the dragon from the juice of the weed and wort patch, and the dragon learns quickly to browse the patch himself. On the last day of the training season, Jakkin trains his dragon to free himself from a wing pin. Soon after, mating season for dragons occurs, and Jakkin isn't able to attend to his dragon as often, having been promoted to help with mating. Shortly after, Jakkin asks his own dragon if he can fly, and is amazed as he flies away. An hour passes, but the dragon returns, and Jakkin knows his dragon remains his.

## Chapter 14 - Chapter 16 Analysis

Chapter fourteen serves several functions in the novel. First, Likkarn's comments about the male drakk in earlier chapters is now understood, as the drakk is seen in this chapter attempting to kill Jakkin's dragon. Jakkin's responses, in putting himself in harm's way for the creature as well as sacrificing himself for the animal's safety, shows clearly his care and concern for his dragon. Further, the dragon's response to Jakkin's cry of pain shows too his own loyalty to Jakkin. Additionally, the dragon's pushing away of the body, the licking of the wound, and the kicking of sand onto the drakk to stop the smell shows the creature is highly intelligent and has a high level of instinct. This chapter also reveals the owner of the footprint from the previous chapters, as Akki is discovered to be the one following Jakkin. This explains how Akki seemed to always be in a position to come to Jakkin's aid in previous chapters. Jakkin's jealousy of the dragon's response to Akki shows both that he loves his dragon, but also that he has feelings for Akki. Finally, Jakkin's questions about Akki and her past, in addition to the information about rumors at the nursery, show that there is more to the young girl than meets the eye.

Chapter fifteen gives depth to the character of Akki, as well as discusses her relation with Sarkkhan. Akki's refusal of Sarkkhan's gold, even at Jakkin's insistence, shows she is independent, as well as that she and Sarkkhan have some form of ill relationship.



Additionally, Sarkkhan's comments about Akki and her mother foreshadow the information later that Sarkkhan is Akki's daughter. Akki's refusal to accept Sarkkhan as her master, her comments about no man filling her bag, and her revelations that her mother was a bag girl all combine to imply what is discovered later, that Sarkkhan had sexual relations with her mother, who died during her birth. In addition, Jakkin's sympathy for Likkarn again show him to be a good person. Finally, Akki's offer to help Jakkin learn to train his dragon show her feelings for him are deepening, although questions arise again as to the relationship between her and Sarkkhan.

Much time passes in chapter sixteen, allowing the story to progress without specific details. The dragon's progress improves, and Jakkin's lessons to the dragon of freeing its self from a pinning foreshadow its use of this move later in the novel. The dragon's weaning, his ability to fly, and his improving fighting skills show him to be developing quickly. Additionally, Akki proves to be true to her word, although her disappearances deepen the mistrust Jakkin already feels toward his friend. Finally, this section shows that Jakkin and his dragon are truly bonded, in that the dragon returns, even after his first flight.



# Chapter 17 - Chapter 19

## Chapter 17 - Chapter 19 Summary

In chapter seventeen, a year passes, and Jakkin's dragon is a full red, and Jakkin knows he is ready to fight. His gold is used to pay for food, which Akki is able to buy. Although Jakkin could steal it from Sarkkhan, he never chooses to do so. One evening, Akki brings Jakkin the papers to sign in order to register his dragon at a local pit in Krakkow. When asked how Jakkin plans to get his dragon there, he admits he was thinking of riding it. After a long lecture from Akki, he hurtfully notes he was thinking of riding in a harness, and not freely. Akki notes if he had more time, that would be possible, but that since he doesn't, she has a friend with a dragon trailer. Jakkin angrily reminds her she promised not to tell anyone. Akki reminds him he only has three days to figure something out, so Jakkin agrees to accept her help.

In chapter eighteen, Jakkin arrives early at the oasis on the day of the fight, and polishes his dragon to a shine. Finished, he and the dragon travel to meet Akki and her friend, Ardru. Jakkin notices immediately that Ardru's name lacks the double k that signifies a bonder, or the family of bonders. Jakkin wonders about the relationship between Akki and Ardru, but again, knows not to ask. The dragon and Jakkin ride in the back of the trailer, while Akki and Ardru ride in the cab. At the pits, Jakkin is left, with Ardru keeping watch, noting he cannot be caught assisting. Jakkin accuses Akki of not keeping her promises, and Akki points out that if she had, they wouldn't be at the pit. As he and the dragon register and head toward the dragon's appointed stall, they see several other dragons, many of which are agitated. Jakkin's dragon begins to become nervous, but when the two look at one another, both become calm. Jakkin realizes his shirt is stained, and for a moment feels ashamed, but shakes it off, and continues to prepare his dragon. He hears in the pit above that Sarkkhan's dragon is also fighting, but Jakkin knows that Sarkkhan will not recognize Jakkin's Red (the name of his dragon in the pits).

In chapter nineteen, Jakkin winces as he hears who his dragon will be fighting. Bottle O' Rum is known to be a three time winner, and a rough fighter. Jakkin thinks negative thoughts, at first, but musters his courage, and his knowledge that he can, if he has to, remain a bond boy. He knows, however, that he could never give Red up for the stews, and that he must win, in order to keep his dragon. Jakkin looks into the dragon's eyes and sees dragon fire, the sign of a fighter. He warns the dragon to watch himself and leads him to the ring.

## Chapter 17 - Chapter 19 Analysis

In chapter seventeen, more time passes, again allowing the dragon to develop appropriately. The dragon's color deepening, as was foreshadowed previously in the novel, shows it again to be a fighter, and his size shows he is nearing a first fight. Akki's



assistance in this novel again shows her willingness to help, but also shows she has a life Jakkin is not aware of. Her knowledge of the world, far beyond Jakkin's, implies she is much more mature, and has much more experience in things. In addition, her knowledge of dragons, her ability to obtain dragon food, and her association with persons who can carry dragons all foreshadow later knowledge that she is Sarkkhan's daughter. Jakkin, on the other hand, is shown in this chapter to be the boy he truly is in such matters. While Jakkin is a wonderful trainer, his lack of knowledge about the world leads him into dangerous situations. Without Akki, Jakkin would have no way of getting into the pits, nor of getting his dragon to the pits. While he is angered that Akki offers to being in outside help, even he has to admit that without it, there is no hope.

Chapter eighteen introduces the idea of the pits, and explains, in detail, their layout and their function. Jakkin takes great care in polishing his dragon, showing both his nervousness and his dedication to detail. Jakkin's impression of Ardru, seemingly a free man, is tainted by his clear questions of how Akki may know this man. This, combined with his need to remain anonymous and Akki's warnings of keeping their involvement a secret, again foreshadow later knowledge of Akki's familial ties. Although Jakkin's behavior during this chapter seems rude, in terms of Akki, it is clear he is frightened, and that he is jealous. Akki seems to understand this, and forgives him for his behaviors. Although Jakkin and his dragon seem slightly jittery, it is also clear both can contain themselves, and that Jakkin is beginning to understand that his role as a trainer. His brief shame at his stained clothing, however, evokes pity in the reader. Jakkin has worked so hard with his dragon, and knows the risks, and has attempted to do as much as possible, but at his core, Jakkin is still simply a bond boy with a dream. Finally, the knowledge that Sarkkhan is also at the pits foreshadows his appearance later in the novel, and his involvement with Jakkin and Akki. Jakkin clearly takes pride in his dragon, and is ready for the battle ahead.

In chapter nineteen, Red's opponent is introduced, setting up the fight that is to come in the upcoming chapters. It is clear Rum is a great fighter, and one who is on a winning streak. However, there are several key [pieces of information that Jakkin is able to obtain, and these pieces become vital in the upcoming chapters. Additionally, Jakkin's understanding of how important this win in, in terms of his dragon, show he is truly beginning to think as an adult. Jakkin knows he can do anything, but he fears nothing more than losing his companion, his dragon. One senses that Jakkin will do anything, not to buy his bond, as he originally intended, but to keep his dragon safe, showing that he has developed into a true dragon trainer. His care is now for his animal, and not for himself.



# Chapter 20 - Chapter 23

## Chapter 20 - Chapter 23 Summary

Chapter twenty finds the betters liking the eagerness of Jakkin's Red in the pit, and finds Jakkin controlling the dragon from the stands. Red entices Rum to attack, and when he falters, Red attacks, drawing first blood. Eager to help his dragon, Jakkin moves to the rail, where he is chastised by the older pit betters. Jakkin, however, proudly moves them aside, as trainers have precedence. Red, eager to fight, begins to charge, against Jakkin's control. At the last minute he pulls up, but is attacked by Rum, and bloodied. The dragon flies to the rooftops and opens its mouth, but no sound emits. Jakkin realizes the dragon is a mute. He reassures the beast, but suddenly feels a hand on his shoulder. He looks up to find Likkarn, sneering. The two argue about where Jakkin got the dragon and what he is using to feed it, while in the pit, Red screams in pain as he is pinned by Rum. Jakkin, ignoring Likkarn, controls Red to remember the escape move he learned. Red surprises Rum and escapes the pin, slashing at Rum in the process. Red wins the match.

In chapter twenty-one, someone cheers in the stands, as they had bet on Jakkin's Red. Rum begins to whine, confusing Jakkin, but Likkarn notes that the dragon is using Fool's Pride. Having been shamed, he wants Red to kill him, and will coerce the dragon into doing so. Jakkin jumps over the rail and runs to Red, screaming for him to stop. Red stops just in time, and Rum slips unconscious. Red celebrates with a color sunburst in Jakkin's mind and goes back to his stall. Jakkin returns to Likkarn and thanks him for the warning, noting he will give Likkarn gold from his second fight. Likkarn is furious, and refuses his offer. Back at the stall, Jakkin tries to help Red, but is pushed aside by Likkarn. Jakkin, concerned for Red, tries to stop Likkarn, but is pulled off him by someone from behind.

In chapter twenty-two, it is revealed the Sarkkhan is the man who pulls Jakkin off Likkarn. He warns Jakkin that Likkarn may be a weeder, but that he does know dragons, and knows how to heal wounds. Jakkin, however, reminds Sarkkhan that Red hates Likkarn as much as Jakkin himself. Sarkkhan, realizing this is true, takes over himself, and helps heal the dragon's wounds. Sarkkhan reveals he has known all along about Jakkin and the dragon. Jakkin at first believes Akki has been telling Sarkkhan and has betrayed him. In fact, he purposefully left the count incorrect, hoping Jakkin, whom he had his eye on for months, would steal the hatchling. He reminds Jakkin that all good trainers need a chance to steal an egg, as he himself did, to get out of bond. Sarkkhan notes he always had high hopes for Jakkin, and also informs him that Likkarn helped him when he was in bond. Although Sarkkhan has a talent for knowing when an egg holds a dragon, it was Likkarn who taught him to train them. Sarkkhan takes Jakkin upstairs to collect his winnings, and on the way, Jakkin finds out his dragon is a female, and that Sarkkhan is Akki's father, although he would be happy to give Akki to Jakkin. Sarkkhan helps Likkarn, in a weed dream, and reminds Jakkin Likkarn was not always a weeder, and was once great, but that he feared being free, and let it destroy him. When



Jakkin reminds Sarkkhan Red is a mute, he explains that he bred her that way, so she could fight without ever giving anything away. Sarkkhan also tells Jakkin that he will sponsor Red's fights, and that Jakkin is no longer in bondage, but is instead a master trainer. Instead of gold for his bond, Sarkkhan asks for first pick of Red's first litter. Jakkin is overwhelmed, but Sarkkhan impatiently tells him not to always take what is first given. Learning, Jakkin negotiates that Sarkkhan can have his pick of the second litter, and the two come to terms as they go to get Jakkin's winnings, as well as Sarkkhan's, for he too bet on Red, on Likkarn's advice.

In chapter twenty-three, Jakkin is back at the nursery, where Red is housed in a small barn away from the other dragons. She and Jakkin have won two more fights, and Jakkin knows Sarkkhan trusts him. Jakkin slips into the desert to his oasis, as he recalls the first time he saw Akki after the first pit fight. She reports that she didn't return to the nursery because she had only stayed to help Jakkin. She also tells him she has repaid Sarkkhan the amount of her bond and that she has to leave. Jakkin does not understand. Later, he sees Akki again at the oasis, and although the two speak little, they hold hands. Still later, Akki arrives at the oasis, and the two kiss. Akki explains that she really must leave. Jakkin jokingly replies that Sarkkhan has given her to him, and that she belongs with him. Akki angrily replies that both Jakkin and Sarkkhan are boys, and leaves. Jakkin tries to follow, but loses her in the sand. This night, Jakkin reaches the oasis, and is reminded that he has paid his bond, as well as bought the bond of Errikkin. He stills owes Sarkkhan, but he owes him as a master, not as a bonder. However, although Jakkin no longer has to wear the bag, he has sworn to until he can give Akki all the gold it contains, and have her take it freely, accepting him as a master, and a man.

## Chapter 20 - Chapter 23 Analysis

Chapter twenty proves that Red is a fighting dragon and that Jakkin is a good trainer, although he still has much to learn. Jakkin's first moves are wonderful, and Red responds appropriately. However, his inability to train the animal in crowds of people hurts him, as his dragon responds to others instead of his trainer. Additionally, Jakkin's unusual use of my and you instead of thee and thou when he discovers the animal is mute cause confusion, which costs him concentration on the part of the dragon. However, the dragon's instincts and natural abilities help him as he knows when to strike, and knows how to tend his own battle wounds. However, it is Jakkin's run in with Likkarn that nearly costs him his win. Likkarn is clearly trying to disrupt Jakkin, but at the last minute, Jakkin is able to pull it out. The lesson with shaking off a wing pin, foreshadowed previously, is used here to help the creature win.

However, in chapter twenty-one, readers find the battle is not yet over. Surprisingly, Likkarn helps Jakkin, as he warns him about Fool's Pride. Red is susceptible to coercion, as are all dragons, and he nearly makes the mistake of his life by killing the opponent dragon. Without Likkarn's warning, Jakkin, too, would have lost his dragon. When Likkarn reveals he lost his fortunes and his dragons in this way, one cannot help but believe that perhaps Likkarn was trying to save Jakkin the same fate. This is further



showed by his refusal to accept Jakkin's gold. Additionally, Likkarn's comments, that he will fill his bag himself, show him to be a prideful character, and this lends pity to his character. Likkarn is a weeder, but he is not broken. This is further shown by his attempts to help heal Red. Jakkin clearly knows nothing of healing dragon wounds, but Likkarn seems to be trying to help, although his methods seem odd, which is explained in the next chapter. However, it is clear Red and Jakkin both are angered by his attempts, showing again that Jakkin, despite his pity toward Likkarn, dislikes him.

Chapter twenty-two reveals much about the storyline that had previously been foreshadowed. Not surprisingly, Sarkkhan is the person who pulls Jakkin back, and Sarkkhan is the one who eventually helps Red with his wounds. His revelations that he purposefully miscounted the hatchlings to give Jakkin a chance show not only his belief in Jakkin as a possible trainer, but also his willingness to help bonders become freemen. This is explained when it is revealed that he himself bought out of bondage in the same way. Further, Sarkkhan's revelations about his relationship with Likkarn explain why he has been so lenient with the man, and why he clearly cares very much for him. His comments that Likkarn was once a great man show the extend of Likkarn's weeding habit, and explain why Sarkkhan trusted Likkarn to be the spy. Sarkkhan's revelations that he is Akki's father, foreshadowed throughout the novel, explain her secrecy, defiance, and her desire to remain anonymous. Sarkkhan teaches Jakkin much in this chapter about being a master, as well as being a man, in that he teaches him to fight for himself, to have compassion, to take what is rightfully his, and to negotiate. In the end, Sarkkhan gives Jakkin his freedom, and with it, his dream of becoming a dragon trainer.

The final chapter in the book, chapter twenty-three, shows that Jakkin has now become a young man, although he still has moments of boyish behavior. Having achieved his own dream, Jakkin upholds his friend's wishes and buys Errikkin's bond, showing he is a loyal friend. However, his relations with Akki are strained, in that Akki feels she needs to leave the nursery, since she stayed only to help Jakkin. Jakkin knows he does not want Akki to go, but has difficulty expressing this. Even after their clear signs of affection, Jakkin finds he cannot tell Akki his feelings, and his blundered attempts only serve to push her away. Akki's departure leaves Jakkin incomplete, and his vow to win her shows he understands what he has lost. Further, his vow to only remove his bond bag after she accepts him as a master and a man shows that he cannot be free until he wins the woman he loves.





# Characters

## Jakkin Stewart

Jakkin Stewart is the main character in the story. Born free to a kind mother and a father who taught feral dragons, Jakkin and his mother were sold into bondage when his father was killed by a dragon. Jakkin's mother died when he was just a young boy, leaving Jakkin alone to earn his way to freedom. Like his father, Jakkin has a natural knack with dragons, but unlike his father, Jakkin has the advantage of working as a bonder at a dragon nursery. Jakkin plans carefully, and is able to raise enough crops in a secret oasis and is able to steal a dragon hatchling. Jakkin does this not to be a criminal, but instead as one of the only ways to ensure he can buy back his freedom. Jakkin is a proud young man who accepts little friendship or help from others. But Akki, a local girl, finds hers way into his heart, and Jakkin learns to trust her as he and his dragon form a nearly inseparable bond. Jakkin clearly loves his dragon and is a caring friend to his few friends from the nursery, as well. As Jakkin learns that being a master is about being able to play the game, he also learns that being a partner to someone is much more difficult. In the end, Jakkin succeeds in buying his freedom, but still must fight to earn the trust and respect of the woman he loves.

## Jakkin's Red

Jakkin's Red is the name of Jakkin's dragon, a deep red dragon who, from an early stage, can breathe fire and fly. As a young hatchling, the dragon was late to come from his shell, but showing colors that would deepen into a deep blood red, the sign of a fighter. Unbeknown at the time to Jakkin, Sarkkhan purposefully did not count the young dragon, in order to entice Jakkin to steal it. From the beginning, Jakkin and the young dragon have a natural bond that can be seen through their telepathic link with one another. Jakkin's Red sends Jakkin colored signals in response to her thoughts that show fear, calmness, anger, and even humor. As Red grows, she becomes more adept at fighting, and grows more attached to Jakkin as a master. Although it is discovered Red is a mute, as well as a female, only in the later chapters does Red proves to be a more than an apt fighter as well as a great companion. Red is playful and protective as she helps to fight off a drakk, as well as protects Jakkin from Likkarn, the cruel handler of the bond boys. It is Red's fighting skills and beauty that help earn Jakkin his way out of bondage, and help them both to be free, but it is her constant companionship and love that allow Jakkin to begin to really grow as a person.

## Akkhina

Akkhina, or Akki, is the daughter of Master Sarkkhan, although this information is not revealed until the end of the novel. Akki is a beautiful, dark haired young woman who works at the nursery as a supposed bonder in the hospital as a nurse. she cares for



both dragons and humans. Often by herself and aloof, Akki is secretly admired by many of the boys, who believe she would be better suited to work as a prostitute in the baggery. Akki cares for Jakkin after he is hurt during a run in with a dragon, and she saves Jakkin from Dark After one night following a trip to his secret oasis. Akki reveals she has been following Jakkin and promises to keep his secret safe. The two begin a friendship, and Jakkin learns that Akki, too, will allow no one to do her work for her and will not sell herself out of bondage. Akki continues to help Jakkin, and the two grow closer. However, Jakkin learns that Akki hates Master Sarkkhan because he is her father and that she would rather be a bonder than his daughter. In the end, Akki helps Jakkin and Red win their first fight, but once Jakkin's dream is a reality, Akki leaves. Jakkin promises himself he will win her love.

## Likkarn

Likkarn is the older man originally in charge of the bond boys at the nursery. Likkarn is "fussy and unforgiving", as well as being extremely cool in his punishments. Likkarn is a weeder, or someone addicted to the plant blisterweed, a highly addictive plant that makes the smoker extremely unpredictable and violent. After nearly killing Jakkin and killing a prize dragon, Likkarn is broken back to stall boy and stripped of his bond money. Angry, Likkarn spends much of the book seeming to get back at Jakkin. However, at the end, Jakkin learns that Likkarn was acting on behalf of Sarkkhan as he watched to see how well Jakkin trained his dragon. Likkarn, Jakkin learns, was once free, and took Sarkkhan in as a trainer. Likkarn taught him everything he knew. Unfortunately, Likkarn became a weeder and lost his ability to be a free man. Sarkkhan took him in because of his debt to the man, but realizes that he will never be the same.

## Sarkkhan

Sarkkhan is the master of the nursery. He is one of the best breeders on Austar IV, and as such, has a thriving business as a trainer, as well, for dragons in the pits. Sarkkhan, it is revealed, learned his trade from Likkarn as a boy, after he stole two hatchlings from the nursery he was bonded to. He earned enough to buy his bond, and became a master himself over time. He took in Likkarn after he became a weeder because of his debt to the man, but he also understands that Likkarn has become a danger to himself and to others. Sarkkhan treats his bonders well, although he is rarely present. He took an interest in Jakkin when he realized he was great with dragons, and he allowed him to steal his own, knowing Jakkin could become a great trainer and help Sarkkhan. It is also revealed at the end of the novel that Sarkkhan is the father of Akki, and although their relationship is clearly bad, the reasons for this are not discussed.

## Kkarina

Kkarina is the cook for the bonders at the nursery. Kkarina is a larger woman with friendly eyes, but she always seems hard to the bonders. When Jakkin finds her in the



kitchen following his injury, however, he finds her to be kind and very motherly. Kkarina also reveals she is not a bonder, but instead a woman who chooses to be a cook for the bonders, even though she herself is a master. She reminds Jakkin that she had enough time being "mindless" in the baggeries, and Jakkin is surprised to see in a photo that Kkarina was once young and beautiful. Kkarina, however, earned her freedom and chose a life of work instead of a life of unhappiness as the wife of a master, or a master of bonders.

## **Errikkin**

Errikkin is another bond boy, and a friend of Jakkin's. He is a kind boy and is quick to understand when the joshing of others boys goes to far. In addition, Errikkin is a boy who understands the values of friendship and loyalty. He asks Jakkin, once he knows Jakkin will become a master before the rest, to buy his bond, as he would rather work for someone he knows and cares for. Jakkin does, in fact, buy his bond from Sarkkhan following his rise to Master.

## **Slakk**

Slakk is another bonder, and a supposed friend of Jakkin. Slakk, however, looks out only for himself. He spends much of his time worrying about to further his own agenda. When Slakk is supposed to bathe the dragons, he talks Jakkin into doing the task for him. However, when Jakkin accidentally leaves the brush in the washing pen and it is discovered by Likkarn, Slakk does not come to his aid, but instead sells him out. He does not seem remotely guilty about this, either.

## **Ardru**

Ardru is a local man who knows Akki and who appears to be good friends with the young woman. While their relationship is unclear, it is clear that Ardru has a level of care and respect for the young woman. He agrees to help Akki and Jakkin take Jakkin's Red to her first fight, even at great risk to himself.

## **Bottle O' Rum**

Bottle O' Rum is the dragon who battles Red during her first fight. Bottle O' Rum is a more seasoned fighter, and he nearly wins the match. But with Jakkin's direction, Red defeats Rum. Rum, angry and shamed, has Fool's Pride, which is a desire, following a lost fight, for the opponent dragon to kill him. Red nearly does so, which would render him useless. At the last minute, however, Jakkin is able to stop Red, thereby saving Rum and allowing Red to continue competing.



# Objects/Places

## Austar IV

Austar IV is the planet on which the novel takes place. Austar IV is the fourth planet of the Erato Galaxy. The planet is covered by vast deserts, hot springs, and small sections of farmland. The planet is best known for its dragons.

## Bond bag

The bond bag is the bag that each bonder carries that contains the gold he or she has earned. Once filled, the bonder turns his or her bag in for freedom from bondage.

## Bonder

A bonder is a person who works for a Master in order to raise a certain amount of money after which he or she can buy freedom.

## Dark-After

Dark-After is the time when both moons dip below the horizon before the dawn. During this time, the planet surface becomes too cold for humans to survive outside.

## Baggery

The baggery is a type of prostitution house in the novel, where young women work off their bond as lovers for male bonders or masters.

## Blisterweed

Blisterweed is a plant used for food for dragons. It is also used as a highly dangerous drug, as those smoking blisterweed become addicted, and can go into horrible violent rages.

## Blister Fury

Blister fury is the rage that can ensue when one smokes the drug known as blisterweed.



## **Drakk**

A drakk is a winged creature who flies above the earth and feeds on baby dragons.

## **Pitons**

Pitons are knife like clamps that help on climb trees, searching for Drakks.

## **Fool's Pride**

Fool's Pride is the driving force of a dying dragon to demand death from its opponent. The defeated dragon feels shame, and as such, in some cases demands that the opponent dragon kill him or her.

# Themes

## Coming of Age

The story of *Dragon's Blood* is, at its heart, the coming of age story of Jakkin Stewart. Jakkin begins the story as a young bonder who dreams of becoming a free master through his work with dragons. He plans the theft of an egg, knowing he may grab an egg that contains no dragon, but willing to take the chance. His work in building an oasis for the animal shows his seriousness. However, when he is hurt in a fight with a dragon and Likkarn and is hospitalized, he loses his chance. Not wanting to give up his dream, though, Jakkin struggles through pain and suffering, in order to see if he can still reach his goal. When he discovers a miscount of hatchlings, however, Jakkin shows his true determination as he steals not an egg, but a baby dragon. It is at this point that Jakkin begins to develop into a young adult. Over the next few months, his work with the dragon, his continued work at the nursery, his battles with drakks and his consistent balance between responsibility to the nursery and his own dreams show his development as a person. His relations with Akki, too, show him to be developing into a young man as he seeks to do what is right. Whereas the novel points to stereotypical rites of passages such as going on a drakk hunt and having sex with a woman as the standards for becoming a man, Jakkin shows that this journey is really one of learning to achieve one's goals and learning to care for and respect others.

## Personal responsibility

Another theme throughout the novel is the taking of full responsibility for one's actions and for one's life. From the beginning, Jakkin has a saying that he fills his bag himself. His mother, too, said the same phrase. To his mother, this meant that they would take help from no one, and that they would earn their way back to freedom. Unfortunately, his mother died not long after the pair went into bondage. To Jakkin, this means that he, and only he, will work to fill his bag. He will accept no one else's help to obtain his freedom. Akki, too, says that she will accept no man's gold to help fill her bag. To Akki, this has multiple meanings. Her father, Sarkkhan, does not require her to be a bond girl. However, because of her relations with her father, she chooses to be a bond girl rather than to be his daughter. Secondly, Akki is a beautiful girl, but she chooses not to work in the baggeries, where she could quickly earn her bond. Instead, she is willing to work for her money respectably, while learning a trade she can use the rest of her life. Even Sarkkhan, the Master, admits that he values a man who is willing to work for his freedom in any way he can. In this way, Jakkin and Akki both show themselves to take full responsibility for themselves and their own lives.



## Choices and Consequences

The theme of choices and their consequences is another one throughout the novel. Jakkin makes choices throughout the book that balance between his own dreams for freedom and doing what is right. It is Jakkin's adherence to his principles of not stealing goods or materials from his master that show Sarkkhan, in the end, that Jakkin is a good person. Although he steals the hatchling, this is viewed as acceptable, whereas stealing food and other supplies would not be. Jakkin's choices are what lead him to his freedom. Kkarina's choices, too, have led to her freedom and her happiness. Kkarina worked in the baggeries, but was miserable. It was only when she became free that she was able to do what she wanted. Her choice to cook for the bonders has led to her happiness, even though this choice is one that is often viewed as odd by bonders and free men alike. Likkarn too has had to live with the consequences of his choices. Likkarn was once a trainer, and a good breeder. However, his addiction to blisterweed led to his demise, and consistently leads to his downfalls. Jakkin's father, too, made choices that led to his demise. He chose to work with feral dragons, which eventually led to his death, and the bondage of his wife and child. Through these characters, it is clear that the choices we make have vast effects on our lives.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person. This point of view is necessary, in that the narrator can tell information about the actions and emotions of several characters, although the focus is almost always on Jakkin. This is important to the plot of the novel, since the emotional growth of the character is a vital theme to the story, as is the bond between the dragon and his keeper. The impact of this emotional bond and the growth of Jakkin as a character would be more difficult to show if the novel were written in another point of view. Told as a combination between dialog and description, the novel is kept to the narrow focus of Jakkin, since the story is really about the relationship between his dragon and himself. Jakkin spends much of the time alone in the desert, training his dragon and avoiding the other bonders. If the novel was not focused on the inner thoughts of Jakkin's character, these long passages would tell little of the storyline. Additionally, there are some areas of the novel where time passes quickly, such as the year that passes between Jakkin's initial training of the dragon and his first fight. These would be impossible if the novel were told in a different manner.

## Setting

The novel is set on the fictional planet of Astar IV, the fourth planet of the Erato Galaxy, which has seven planets. There are two moons, and after the setting of both, there is a period of every night called the After-Dark, where surface temperatures drop below what human beings can survive. The planet was originally designated a penal colony, and its arid, metal poor, desert landscape is less than friendly for human existence. The planet is mostly desert, with some hot springs and areas of localized vegetation. With only five major rivers and little foliage, the planet is difficult to farm, but its vast quantity of dragons makes it a perfect planet for dragon nurseries. Burnwort and blisterweed, the two most populous plants, feed the dragons, as well. The dragons range in size from a rock to that of an elephant and are warm blooded creatures with wings. Almost extinct when the planet was settled in 2303, the dragons were domesticated and bred into fighting creatures. Gaming pits were organized, and the planet began to rely on gaming as a central form of income. After years of illicit gambling, the planet came under Galaxian Law and bonders and masters were introduced.

Much of the novel takes place at Sarkkhan's nursery, where Jakkin is a bonder. There are snippets of the novel which take place at Jakkin's oasis in the desert, a small areas with a stream and patch of blisterweed and burnwort. Finally, there is a small section of the novel which takes place at Krakkow's Minor Pit, a fighting pit for newer fighting dragons.





## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is designed for a younger audience, so is informal and easy to read. There are some larger words, but the writing style is such that a younger reader should have no problems discerning the meaning of even the larger words, as they are used well contextually. There are some areas of language specific to the novel, such as the longer passages about dragon lore and dragon anatomy, but even these passages are explained in detail, so these areas do not cause increased difficulty in understanding the novel. In fact, these sections of the novel that deal with things specific to the fictitious planet help to set the story and add depth to the setting of the novel. In addition, the language in the novel is used to differentiate between the classes of characters in the book. Free persons in the novel tend to have a higher education level and speak more properly than the bonders, who have little education. Although none appear overly uneducated, there are subtle differences in speech patterns that can help indicate whether a character is a bonder, or is free. Finally, the dialog between Jakkin and his dragon can, at times, seem strange, since dragon trainers use words such as "thou" and "thee" when speaking with the dragons to improve the closeness between the dragon and his trainer. This is unusual at first, but after several chapters, the language shift becomes indiscernible.

## Structure

Dragon's Blood is made up of three sections, "The Hatchling", "The Snatchling", and "The Fighter". "The Hatchling" includes ten chapters, "The Snatchling" includes six chapters, and "The Fighter" includes seven chapters, for a total of twenty-three chapters, all of unequal length. There is also an Introduction, a chart of Jakkin's dragon's bloodline, and a preview of the second book in the series, "Heart's Blood", at the end of the novel. Each chapter is the number of the chapter, whereas the names of the sections refer to the stages of Jakkin's dragon.

The plot of the novel is simple, although there are a variety of subplots. The novel is primarily about Jakkin Stewart and his dream of becoming a free person as a dragon trainer. The subplots, however, are his interest in young Akki, her relationship with Sarkkhan, her past, and Jakkin's relationships with the other bonders. Jakkin's search for his own place in the world, and his relationship with his dragon, coincide with his becoming a man.

The pace of the novel is steady, and there is plenty of dialog to keep the reader engaged, while there is also plenty of descriptive passages to keep the setting clear. The novel is also easy to read and engaging with highly personable characters.



## Quotes

"From his perch on the swinging platform Jakkin smiled. All of the dragon's ferocity seemed to slip away, and what was left was a rather silly, oversized lizard, bumbling and rolling about in a pool of muck."

Chap. 3, p. 28

"Then he pushed Likkarn back on the bed and with tears in his eyes said, "I'm sorry, Likkarn. Sorry for all we've meant to one another. Sorry for all the years we shared. But for the sake of the others, for the sake of Blood Brother, I'm going to have to break you. It's back to stallboy.' And he emptied Likkarn's bag into his hand, pocketed all the gold but the grave coin, and put the empty bag gently on the bed beside him."

Chap. 5, p. 58

"You just thought what every bond boy thinks. That a master need not work-except if he wants to play at being a nursery owner or a senator, eh? That any woman lucky enough to have gold to fill her bag would lead a useless, silly life?"

Chap. 6, p. 67

"The living dragon. That was the irony. So few of the eggs held living dragons. Most were decays for the predatory drakk. How often a bonder had had an opportunity to steal an egg, guarding it zealously, only to discover days later that it contained a heavy liquid and nothing else."

Chap. 7, p. 78

"The men marched into the leaves and stabbed the squirming little horrors with their knives, severing the heads from the bodies. The drakklings died quickly, leaving the dreadful stench behind. Their thick, dark blood coated the knives and had to be washed off immediately in the sand. Even then, the blood left pits and ruts in the shine."

Chap. 10, p. 122

"As he left, Kkarina's voice echoed again in his thoughts: 'Most men, after their first roundup...' Most men. Was the passage from boy to man really that easy? And was it always built upon lies?"

Chap. 12, p. 139

"If I cannot learn from a good trainer, then I will learn it all from thee, who comes from a line of fighters, great fighters, from Heart O'Mine out of Heart Safe by Blood Type. Blood Brother was thy father and he was my special charge. And what I learn from thee, I will teach thee back. Together, heart of my heart, blood of my blood, we will be unbeatable. In time. In time."

Chap. 12, p. 145

"Jakkin looked up again and said, as much to Errikkin as himself, "I never considered. I never considered—" he began. "I mean, I never thought that once I was a master, it



meant I could own bonders. I don't think I want that. I don't think I want that at all."  
Chap. 13, p. 160

"What he had felt on the roundup was nothing compared to this. And he knew that if he and the dragon died out in the sands, they might never be found. He remembered his mother crying over his father's bloody corpse. No one would cry over his."  
Chap. 14, p. 170

"'Thou art mine,' he whispered fiercely at the dragon. 'I took thee and I raised thee and I trained thee.' He attacked the dragon's scales with the cloth as if they were an enemy to be rubbed out. And thy name is Jakkin's Red."  
Chap. 18, p. 235

"The red calmed him when he was not calm, cheered him when he thought he could not be cheered. Linked as he was with it now, how could he ever bear to hear its last screams in the stews as the sharp-bladed knack-knife cut across its tender throat links and the hot blood dripped away into the cauldrons? How could he hear that and stay sane?"  
Chap. 19, p. 242

"'Fewmets, boy, of course I knew,' Sarkkhan answered. 'Even when I'm not around, I know everything that happens at my nursery. Everything. Make it my business to know.'"  
Chap. 22, p. 274

"'I know, boy. I always had high hopes for you. You kept yourself apart from the others. Had a kind of dedication about you. A dream you wouldn't dilute with cheap, boyish pleasures. Your coins went into your own bag, not into someone else's. You filled your bag yourself. I like that. I admire that.'"  
Chap. 22, p. 276

"'He wasn't born a weeder, boy. And he hasn't forgotten all he once knew. But he'll never be a real man. Hasn't got the guts to stay out of bond. I hope you do.' Then, shaking his head, Master Sarkkhan moved up the stairs, impatiently waving a hand at the boy to follow."  
Chap. 22, p. 281



## Topics for Discussion

After Jakkin's father was killed, Jakkin's mother sold them into bondage as a way to survive. Do you think this was the right thing to do? Why or why not? Based on the story, what other choices did she have? Would those choices have been as good for Jakkin? Why or why not?

Jakkin ends up a free man at the end of the novel, the end result of his stealing of a dragon hatchling. The book notes this is an accepted theft, in that many bonders buy their way out through the stealing of eggs and raising of dragons. Do you think this is a good lesson? Why or why not? Does the book differentiate what is acceptable and what is unacceptable? Do you think these lessons are okay to include in a book meant for children? Why or why not?

Jakkin's mother makes the comment when he is a child that they "fill their bags themselves". Jack repeats this throughout the novel, as do many of the other bonders. What does this statement mean? Do you think this is a good attitude, or not? Why?

Kkarina, the cook, is not a bonder, but instead has chosen to stay at the nursery. Why do you think she did this? Knowing she was once beautiful, why do you think she chose this life once she was no longer bonded? What does she mean when she chastises Jakkin for thinking she should live a life without work simply because she is not a bonder? What does this say about Kkarina as a person?

In chapter thirteen, Errikkin asks Jakkin to buy his bag when he becomes a master, as he would rather work for someone he knows. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Would you be able to have a friend as a servant and slave? Why or why not?

At the end of the novel, Akki leaves the nursery. It is clear she and Jakkin have mutual feelings for one another. Why does she leave? What do you think her relationship with her father is based on? Why do you think he is so hard on her, and her the same to him? What does Akki choose to leave over staying and being with Jakkin? Do you think Jakkin's comments contribute to her leaving? Why or why not?

One of the main themes of the story is the coming of age of Jakkin. There are several rites of passage in the novel that are mentioned as ways to become a man. Do you think these rites of passage truly make a person a man? Why or why not? If so, how do you explain Jakkin's coming of age through the story? If not, what causes Jakkin to begin to become a responsible young adult in the book? Do his choices always reflect this new responsibility? Why or why not?