



Dragon's Curse

H.L. Burke

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On her first assignment out of the Academy, young healer and scholar, Shannon Macaulay is summoned to the struggling kingdom of Regone to see to the wounds of a young but crippled king. When the unwanted attentions of an aggressive knight and the sudden appearance of a hated dragon turn her world upside down, she decides to take matters into her own hands even if doing so proves dangerous.

Finding herself strangely drawn to the company of the dragon, Gnaw, Shannon must force herself out of her safe world of books and botany to come to the aid of her unexpected ally in a strange kingdom, cursed by a fateful encounter with a dragon and the loss of a beloved prince. Can she learn to put aside her fears, and perhaps sacrifice her deepest desires, to help a friend and restore a family?

Dragon's Curse Details

Date : Published February 2017 by Createspace (first published January 2nd 2014)

ISBN :

Author : H.L. Burke

Format : Kindle Edition 162 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Dragons, Romance, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Dragon's Curse for online ebook

Pauline Ross says

I'm a sucker for a dragon story, and this one is a little different from the usual. It starts as a charming little fairy-tale, where the girl in the dragon's lair is a spirited and smart young scholar rather than a helpless princess, and the dragon isn't quite what he seems, either. The two strike up an unusual friendship. This part of the book was lovely, and I enjoyed every moment of it. The second half is far more predictable, and rather more uneven.

Here's the premise: Shannon is a talented young scholar, determined to take a job as healer in the small kingdom of Regone for the perfectly logical reason that she's the best person to heal the king from injuries sustained while fighting dragons. While there, she is pursued by the amorous knight Sir Roderick, who offers to slay a newly-arrived dragon to win her hand. To avoid this dreadful fate, she sets off to find the dragon herself, and discovers a character surprisingly interested in her books and palace gossip.

The sparky conversations between dragon and scholar are a highlight of the book, but by the midpoint, things become more conventional, and there's a great deal of dashing about avoiding the machinations of the villain, and in general trying to stay alive. The characters devolve into stereotypical good guys and bad guys at this point. It was depressing that the spirited and smart (female) scholar took so little part in this, and it was left to men with swords, spears and crossbows to sort things out. Most of this followed conventional lines, apart from one little twist near the end, where the villain takes an unexpected action.

I would have liked a bit more detail about the setting, which was very much a generic fantasy kingdom, with the usual array of inns, forests, craggy mountains for dragons, farms and so on, not to mention possibly the worst-guarded palace ever. I'm astonished the king wasn't assassinated in an early chapter, the way characters walked insouciantly in and out, without seeing so much as a laundrymaid, never mind a guard. I also wondered why, when dire consequences would occur if a certain character dies within a matter of hours, the other characters didn't just go and hide until the deadline had passed.

This is a light, quick read which is entertaining for those not looking for great depth. It's billed as YA, but it would work perfectly well for MG too. The perfunctory nature of the world-building and the rather simplistic characters would normally make it a three star affair, but the pleasure of the first half, the charm of the two main characters and the avoidance of a too-simple happy ending bump it up to four stars for me.

Katy says

I've had this in my kindle for a while, bought because of the DRAGON, and I really didn't have any idea what the story was about. Thought I'd just "take a peek" and ended up reading it almost straight through. I loved the dragon's character, and I really liked Shannon too, for how brave and loyal she is. The setting is well-visualized, but there were a few scenes of "talking heads" that weren't grounded in the surroundings. For that reason I'm giving this 4.5 stars rounded up to 5. This story is recommended for all dragon and fantasy romance lovers age 12-13 and up. I will definitely be reading the rest of the series!

Gypsy Madden says

I totally fell in love with this series. I had acquired the first book while attending the book release of Beggar Magic (also by the same author) and she had offered the second book in this series at a reduced price at the same time. After I finished this book, I was thankful I had the second installment on hand and immediately had to purchase the last two. I loved the idea of a bookish girl traveling with a male dragon since the dynamic was excessively intriguing. And the story didn't disappoint. In fact, it completely exceeded my hopes with a tantalizing romance, a large problem to solve, and castle intrigue with people plotting, though it did suffer from the usual problem of characters not laying all their cards on the table and speaking their minds. The dialogue does sound a bit stilted (but then I can understand the author was trying to evoke the medieval time period) and all the random Ayes do get a bit jarring. The story started out slowly, and, honestly, my attention was lagging with the tedious treatment of the king, but as soon as Shannon stumbled upon the dragon, I was hooked. Shannon and the dragon's banter is a wonderful thing. And for fantasy fans there is magic a plenty being flung every which way, villains to hate, and an especially put-upon dragon to love. For only .99 cents it's a steal!

Rebekah Rodda says

4.5

Really enjoyed this tale of a scholar girl who confronts a dragon to avoid being married to a loathsome knight. This is an entertaining read that hooked me in enough to get the whole series and read it without reviewing in between. The banter between the dragon and Shannon is particularly fun but I liked the strong friendships between some of the main characters. The plot twists were guessable but in a good way.

If you like fun light fantasy, this is a great read. However, in regards to the series as a whole, there are a lot of sexual references (especially book 3).

Maggie Dory says

I received this book free of charge in exchange for my honest review. All opinions are my own and I never commit to a positive review prior to reading.

I thoroughly enjoyed Dragon's Curse (The Dragon and the Scholar vol. I) by H.L. Burke. I kind of accidentally stumbled upon this book when I was searching for other bloggers with similar interests. As I've said before, finding a good, talented, upcoming author is a bit like mining. You get a lot of dirt and junk, but occasionally you find a real gem. H.L. Burke is one of these rare gems, and I would give Dragon's Curse a solid 3.5/5 rating. (Not that this book is bad, I just have extremely high standards to give a 4 or 5).

If you enjoy fantasy novels and tales about magic, dragons, and a bit of romance, this is a good book for you. The main protagonist, Shannon, is an adorable and stubborn scholar whose first assignment out of the academy (which is basically college) is to treat a neighboring king's poisoned dragon wounds. Although slightly nervous, Shannon is confident in her ability as a healer and is determined to prove her worth to her mentor at the Academy, a man named Martin. Shannon quickly discovers that all is not well in the kingdom of Regone and finds herself allied with a dragon to overcome some unexpected challenges, including an

over-zealous would be suitor and an evil witch.

I personally enjoyed the strong fantasy plot of this novel. While not exactly a brand new story, Dragon's Curse is told in a fun and inventive way. I liked that Shannon is strong willed and mostly unafraid from the very beginning. Her intelligence and natural curiosity are her main strengths and not merely personality quirks. I found the dialogue to be overall fairly good, although some of the conversations between characters felt almost too tongue-in-cheek or trite at times and I was unsure if what I was reading was supposed to be serious or not.

I definitely recommend this book for anyone who likes epic fantasy and dragons. It is also a good book for fans of romance novels, although romance is not the main theme of the book. I am looking forward to reading the next book in the series, Dragon's Debt, and the third book, which is set for release later this year.

Selena says

In general, I liked it. For the most part, I liked the characters (with exceptions, but those exceptions I'm pretty sure we're supposed to hate), I liked the writing (though there were parts that could use improvement), and I liked the plot (but it could use some polishing).

So, you're asking, why three stars if I liked it? Well, it started strong and then the second half got a bit weaker. That's the biggest reason. The other reason is probably that I was reading Book Girl and the Captive Fool at the same time and while I know it's hardly fair to hold a first book to the same standards... it can't be helped.

Breaking it down...

Characters

As I said, overall I liked the characters.

Shannon I liked from the get-go. She had some irritating qualities, but for the most part she was what I want in a character. She's smart and doesn't take crap from anyone. She knows what she wants (most of the time) and goes after it (even if she doesn't quite know what it is). My only complaint is that she could be a touch oblivious. I guessed right away about "Gnaw" and for the most part how this book would end. It took her ages. And she, like many others, went downhill with the second half. The first half she was initiating the action. She was involved, she was *acting* on the universe, on the story. She *caused* things to happen. In the second half, she became reactionary and then to love-sick and damsel-in-distress. It's like she got downgraded from awesome smart independent character I totally "got" to... well... Princess Peach, needing to be rescued. I mean, she barely even *tried*. I mean:

There wasn't much point to fighting against Roderick, but she kicked and flailed a bit for good measure.
(bold emphasis by me)

I'm sorry, what was that? I haven't been this irritated since Zelda in *Twilight Princess* dropping the goddamn sword without doing anything!

"Gnaw" is another character I liked, though I think I liked him more in the beginning than as the story progressed. He's a bit of a smart ass and cracks awful jokes. I really appreciated this falling flat of his humor;

humans just shouldn't get all dragon jokes, you know?

But he, like Shannon, changed by the second half. Soon as his true identity was revealed he went from Dread Pirate Roberts ("Good night, Westley. Good work. Sleep well. I'll most likely kill you in the morning" type snark) to almost-stereotypical knight in shining armor. He lost his lovable smart-assiness.

Martin didn't get much screentime, but he was by far one of the most consistent of the characters. He's a bookworm. He pretty much lives in academia. He doesn't know how to use a sword (or at least not well), he has an extreme weakness for pretty women, and despite his brains he's also totally oblivious. Unlike Shannon, who's sharp and gets more oblivious as things go on, he starts and ends this way.

Adonna was also one of the more consistent of the batch. She came across as a power-hungry gold-digger from the get-go and stays that way. More is added to her character in a way that expands upon her character, rather than changing her. I don't want to say too much because spoilers, but while I didn't like her, she definitely made a good bad guy. The way things ended with her, though... I'm not sure I liked it. A part of me is going, "But that doesn't fit in with her personality..." so there you go.

The other "bad guy" was Roderick. I hated this guy. Absolutely despised him. I know we were supposed to hate him, but unlike Adonna who had depth, he was pretty much what you saw at the beginning. He pretty much saw Shannon as an object. The entire time. Something to be won or stolen. Seriously.

The last character who isn't really worth mentioning is Edmond. There's not much to say about him. He pretty much just was there as a plot device to get Shannon to go to Regone, give her something to do, give Adonna's plan teeth... He didn't do a whole lot in story.

Story

As I said earlier, the story gets weaker as it goes. It starts out strong with Shannon helping Edmond recover and meeting "Gnaw" the dragon and trying to protect her new friend. It's a great premise, especially when Gnaw's true identity is revealed, but sadly that's also the turning point. After that point, the story loses steam due to what seems like writing fatigue. The characters change at this point, the writing becomes a bit less good, and all of that affects the story.

While the story itself is pretty good throughout, the way it was implemented wears thin. It almost feels like after about page 100, Burke was getting worn down and just wanted to finish. Whether this is the case or not... *shrug*

Writing

The writing starts out strong for a first book, but like the story, it gets weaker as you go (or it's getting weaker might cause the story to, hard to tell cause and effect in this case).

It starts strong and witty, and even more wonderfully, it *allows the wit to fall flat*. Gnaw's humor fails almost regularly, which is wonderful. It's hard to let a character screw up, and not be a constant source of argument-winning wit, so I give Burke a lot of credit for this (and I loved it).

The dialogue is pretty good until that 100 page point. At times it's a bit awkward, but not nearly as bad as the tongue-tying phrases used later. There's also a lot less of it at the start than at the beginning. I kind of wish there was more narration throughout in general rather than dialogue.

I wish there was a bit more detail when describing the universe. We're pretty much left on our own until

characters discuss things (some of which seem to be common knowledge for the characters). I think regular narration would've been more helpful.

Overall, however, I enjoyed it for the most part. It's had its weaknesses, but for a self-published book it was pretty good. It could've used a bit more polishing, I think, but for what it was, it was good. It might have some problems, but don't let that stop you. As I said, there's a chance I'm being overly critical after reading Book Girl.

Free copy courtesy of H.L. Burke and Goodreads First Reads, which in no way influences this review

Erica says

Young Shannon is sent to the kingdom of Regone to act as a caretaker to the king. She is highly skilled in potions and herbs, and she has the skills needed to heal his venomous dragon wounds. Unfortunately, a dragon settles in a cave near the castle, which fuels the old desire to hunt dragons once again.

I have to say that I love books about dragons that bring something new to the table. This isn't your typical "go kill the dragon and win the girl's heart" kind of book. This dragon is not your ordinary dragon. In fact, Shannon and the dragon quickly become friends. And why not? A dragon must get lonely in a land where there are so few left alive.

As it turns out, this dragon is the victim of a curse, hence the title of the book. I refuse to give away the nature of this curse, but it is nicely done, involving the schemes of a diabolical sorceress. Not only did I enjoy the dragon's story, I got my favorite type of villain as well. Who wouldn't be delighted?

Shannon is a level-headed and likeable character. She is strong enough to resist the advances of Sir Roderick, who grows more obsessed with her by the day. Also, she is intelligent and not afraid to stand up for herself. My only disappointment was her few moments spent as a damsel in distress. Since she is a scholar, it would probably have broken character for her to haul off and beat the living crap out of a burly man. I still hoped she would grab a dagger or something else sharp and save herself. Luckily, she does not play that role too long, and she does not dwell on being a victim.

The action scenes are nicely done, and I did enjoy them. I wish there had been more to the story! It is rather short at only 150 pages. The author could have easily added on with more descriptions of the world, which I would have liked to see. Also, Shannon's first trip to the dragon is a total surprise. I wasn't given enough of her thoughts and feelings to guess she might be planning to converse with the massive creature. The story skips that part entirely, and opens a chapter with her already inside the dragon's cave. Add in that missing bit, and the story would be fledge out just a bit better in my opinion. That being said, it did not feel herky-jerky. The narrative flowed nicely, and it never became dull or tedious to read.

I was given a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

Kati says

I had a couple of major issues with this book, first and foremost being what a colossal letdown it was in the

end. I thoroughly enjoyed this for the first 40% or so - scholarly girl who doesn't take anyone's crap and knows how she deserves to be treated? Heck yeah, sign me up! Unfortunately, it was all downhill from there. I will admit, I think the description of the book seriously led me astray. If I'd realized this was "fantasy romance," I never would have picked it up - mostly because the following is exactly what I'd be afraid would happen.

(major spoilers ahead)

As soon as Shannon realized who "Gnaw" really was, the story went from, "I'm Shannon and I'm on an adventure because I'm an awesome botanist" to "I'm Shannon and I'm in love with this guy, so I need to save him! Just kidding, I got captured super easily and now I'm stuck, help!" We went from strong female lead to basically useless plot device who's stuck in a well for the better half of the book. From there on out, it felt more like dragon-boy was the main character rather than Shannon as he moped around and tried to figure out if he should turn back and/or rescue Shannon. Even the synopses of the other books make it sound like Shannon is just a side character and plot device.

Some other things worth mentioning were the boring side characters (most importantly, Edmond and Martin) and the internalized misogyny. I'm so tired of reading about how evil women are because they stand up against sexism (i.e. "this woman and her entire line must be nuts because the woman got mad over losing her rightful crown"). Not to mention the fact that men who use dark magic just kill their hostages, but women are far more evil because they're so manipulative and subtle. Because they're women. *rolls eyes* Even more insidious is the idea that a young girl can be a "reward" for someone else, such as when Adonna offers Shannon to Roderick so he can "have his way with her" when Adonna's finished with her treachery. Not okay, even for a villain.

All in all, this book was massively disappointing to me. Bland and sexist characters, a generic world, and total lack of developed magic system came together to make a grossly stereotypical book. If you don't look into it that deeply, it might be less unsatisfactory, but I definitely would not recommend it.

Claire Banschbach says

I really enjoyed this book. I stayed up late one night to read most of it. :)

The plot was fun (though I admit, I called the twist thinking how cool would it be if....)! I really enjoyed the characters, especially Shannon. She's so straightforward and blunt without being annoying - something that got to be hilarious. Also sarcastic dragons are never a bad thing.

The ending wasn't quite what I was expecting, so now I'm really curious to read the rest of the series to see how this all plays out!

This is my first H.L. Burke book, but I enjoyed it tremendously and am looking forward to reading more by this author.

Kate Wrath says

This book was soooo cute. I really just loved it. Not what I expected at all. A sweet fairytale romp, written intelligently. The story is light but it really tugs at your heart. The characters were fresh and interesting. I liked that they used their heads! Would recommend this book to my friends. Can't wait to start reading the next one.

Meg Dendler says

Wonderfully fun story. I can't wait to read the rest of the series. Highly recommend for middle-grade readers . . . and grown-up ones.

Paige says

So I'm really into books with dragons lately. Just, you know, in case you hadn't noticed. I really loved this one, much more than most even. H.L. Burke is one of those authors that can pack both romance and action into a perfectly wrapped package that will have you ready for more before you've even finished the last page. The characters just really leap off the page, especially Shannon. She seems to have a good head on her shoulders and is just her own person in general, which I really loved about this book.

This is just an honestly beautiful story, in fact it reads a lot like a fairy tale of the Princess Bride variety. Okay, it's completely different from the Princess Bride(don't hurt me die-hard fans!), but it has that sort of flow if you know what I mean. I feel like this story would appeal to a wide variety of readers, of most ages from young teens to adults. I also feel like fans of some romance, science fiction/fantasy, and(of course) dragons in general, will really love this book.

I really liked the dragon in this book--that's all I'm going to say! I've tried and tried to come up with a way to mention all my favorite parts without giving the story away and I just don't think I can do it so I'll just say this--if you're looking for a great book to read, one with great characters, a well developed setting and a writing style that keeps those pages turning so fast you're at risk of a paper cut then Dragon's Curse is the book for you!

I received this book for review from the author, but this in no way affected my opinions as expressed in this review.

Ines Bautista-yao says

I am so happy there are three more books!

I am already a fan of HL Burke's writing. It is crisp, flawless, and witty. Plus, her characters are funny, real, and adorable (yes, most especially the dragon.)

I really liked that Shannon was a strong character who spoke her mind, an excellent healer, had messy hair, and got on the king's nerves. My only issue with her was how she seemed a bit weaker after she'd fallen in love - but just a little bit. Not enough to lessen my enthusiasm for this book.

I couldn't put it down and every chapter was so exciting! I loved all the twists too. While reading it, I had no

idea it was the first in a series and in the end, I thought it ended well - no cliffhangers (thank goodness!) but I also thought, it can't end this way! And when I found out there were more books, I bought the next one right away. Oh, and while reading, I kept excitedly telling my husband the story. He was enthralled too!

Clarice says

Shannon is a young lady who wants adventure. She has never been far from where she grew up and wishes to see more of the world. She wants excitement. When her friend Martin is asked to send a healer to Regone for King Edmond, she knows this could be her chance. But Martin warns her that Regone is a cursed place. I don't think even he knew just how true that actually was.

On reaching Regone, Shannon is immediately introduced to Roderick, a knight who thinks well of himself and happens to take a keen interest in Shannon. Being a free woman though, Shannon has the ability to choose who she wants to be with. Edmond, on the other hand, is a young king, but is sullen and hate driven after the death of his brother at the hand of a dragon. Edmond is bent on killing any dragon that comes around. However, dragons are very hard to kill and the king is in no shape to be out slaying dragons. He was severely burned by one after he went out seeking revenge for his brother, Ewan. But it had not ended well and only a handful of knights came back alive. Shannon was here to try and help the suffering king. But she has a way of saying what she thinks and feels about things that are not exactly suitable for the times, and especially not suited for a king. She begins to get curious about Ewan and the circumstances surrounding his death.

Unfortunately life in Regone is rather lonely for Shannon. She doesn't really have any friends and constantly has to fend off Roderick and his unwanted advances. To make things worse, the king's distant cousin, Adonna, constantly hovers over Edmond and interferes often with her treatments. Adonna seems kind of like a creepy woman; one that Shannon wants to stay far away from. One day though, a dragon is seen in Regone and it stays. Edmond is crazy over it being there and wants to get rid of it. Roderick decides he will go slay this dragon and if he does he wants Shannon to marry him. Shannon protests wildly about it and decides to do something drastic. She goes to see the dragon herself. It turns out that he is much better company than anyone else she has met in Regone so far and starts visiting him on a regular basis. The dragon tends to like her company as well. Shannon isn't like other women.

A large twist comes in the story when it is revealed who that dragon really is and what happened to this man to turn him into a dragon. The circumstances are very strange and lots of things don't add up to Shannon. The deeper she digs though, the more her life is in danger. The one that she, the dragon, and her friend Martin are looking for is right under their noses and they have no idea.

This book is very clean and would be safe for your younger teens to read. It was a really enjoyable read about castles and knights, magic and curses. And to top it off you have a heroine that falls in love with a cursed dragon! However strange it may seem, she sees something else within this dragon that later on in the book reveals itself. Shannon is a great heroine too. She is very forward for the times. She likes to speak her mind and have intelligent conversations. Brutish men are not her thing and she is in no hurry to settle down with the first knight to ask for her hand. She is willing to believe in the good in all people and dragons while not being fooled by them either. Funny enough, she is the only one to be able to win the heart of a cursed prince who doesn't like the normal silly women around him. I enjoyed this book so much I sat down and read it in one night! You should check it out! The next in the series will be coming out in May!

K.M. Carroll says

So you get the gist—Shannon is a bookish healer with impressive credentials, and almost zero real life experience. She can't wait to get out of the Academy and have an adventure, so she persuades her superior and friend Martin to let her go. He does, grudgingly, and she comes to the court of King Edmond.

Edmond has been badly burned and poisoned by dragons. See, his brother got eaten up by a dragon, leading to the death of his dad. Edmond tried to kill the dragon in question, but this became a campaign against all dragons. Which worked fine until he got chewed up.

A dragon comes to live on a nearby mountain, and Edmond froths at it, but he's too sick to do anything about it. Shannon, however, is fascinated. But she's also being stalked by one of those puffed up jock-type knights that we all love to hate, and he tells the king that he'll kill the dragon if the king will give him Shannon for a bride.

Seeing as this is horrible and awful, Shannon goes to the dragon to warn it off. Except the dragon is just as smart as she is, and snarky, and funny, and lonely, and likes for her to read him books. After the dragon defeats the knight, she does just that ... and we begin to suspect that there's more to this dragon than meets the eye.

This book is kind of like The Enchanted Forest Chronicles for a YA audience. (You know, Dealing with Dragons, Searching for Dragons, etc. by Patricia C. Wrede). I say an older audience because of the insinuation of what the knight wants to do to Shannon, and the growing romance between her and the dragon. (The final book is called Dragon's Bride. We can kind of see where this is going.)
