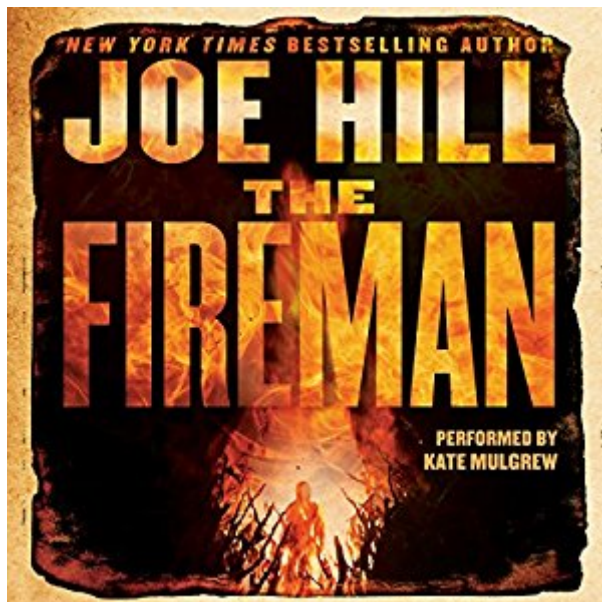


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# The Fireman: A Novel



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 22 hours 5 and 20 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: May 17, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01COQZWTD

Best Sellers Rank: #53 in [Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Horror](#) #263

in [Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Supernatural](#) #339

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## Customer Reviews

The Fireman squanders a great premise (a spontaneous combustion plague) with some curious pacing issues. The first act is wonderful as author Joe Hill (son of Stephen King) explores society's downfall with some ingenious pop culture references (Glenn Beck AND J.K. Rowling bite the dust in this one). However, once our protagonist - a pregnant nurse infected with the dragonscale - finds safe haven in a cult-like camp of other infected individuals, the plot grinds to a halt. At 750 pages, The Fireman is a big book. Unfortunately, about 400 of those pages are spent slowly revealing that the camp is not as safe as it seems (something fairly obvious to the reader the moment our protagonist is welcomed into "The Bright.") There are some interesting ideas and scenes here - for example, the "Cremation Crews" made up of uninfected men are scouring the blasted landscape looking to exterminate anyone infected with dragonscale, a deliciously tense ambulance heist sequence, and a wickedly dark reveal at the end of the novel - but unfortunately, just not enough seems to happen to justify this novel's length (a criticism ironically often lobbed at King's work). And the characters don't seem to grow and evolve as much as have backstory monologues at the appropriate times in the narrative. Joe Hill is an awesome writer (his novel NOS4A2 is a seriously great and inventive horror novel), but The Fireman commits the cardinal sin of apocalyptic plague novels - it gets boring.

I have enjoyed Joe Hill's work to date but this novel really didn't impress me (it looks like I'm in the minority though). I don't like reviews that give too much of the book away, so I'll try to keep it brief. It has an interesting idea at its core but I really felt it was poorly executed: - the book could have been much shorter.. it could have been a far better read if it had been tightened up; - some of the dialogue was cringe-worthy.. people just don't speak like that; - the characters were very one dimensional; - there were a number of occasions where the continuity didn't hold and the author had

to backtrack to cover off something that had not been established earlier. Hill said the book was written over 4 years and I think this shows. The style, to me, seems to change from time to time and the way the characters talk to each other seems to chop and change. All in all I'd say it felt like a bit of a mess.

Of all of Hill's books, I found *The Fireman* to be the most well-written. His characterizations were fantastic; I really became invested in the major, and even some of the minor, characters. The story was tight; Hill did his research. It was the classic trope of how good the good can get and how bad the can bad get when faced with adversity. I really enjoyed this book!

*The Fireman* is one of the best books I read in 2016. This was a really good post-apocalyptic book. I am not usually into post-apocalyptic but I am a fan of Joe Hill. So this was how I dived into this book. I started listening to the audiobook first. As I listened I discovered I have dived into such a good book that I got the kindle book too to switch between reading and listening. The book opens with a breath taking scene. A man burns to death. Harper, a school nurse, doesn't understand what is going on at first. Later, we discover that a strange disease is invading the country. A disease that threatens the mankind. Once people get infected they can burn to death anywhere and at any time. A dragon scale starts to show on their skin. This is the sign of the disease. And it's like a death sentence that can be executed any time. From this point forward, people become enemies. Actually, I won't spoil the story line as this is a book you have to read yourself. This book is so powerful and in more than one dimension. As I said, people who might have once been lovers, families or friends are now enemies. We realize two parties, the healthy and the infected. And though the healthy are so liable to becoming infected at any time, they fight against the infected as though they are themselves the disease. It feels to me like their hatred and fear of the disease had materialized into this hatred towards their own people who happened to get infected before them. From my point of view, this was a very thought provoking concept. Just imagine in our real life how people can turn against each other for such reason. Another thought provoking concept was what I think of as "the group behavior". People in charge used both, the fear and the tendency to group behavior, to lead people in this book as if they were leading a herd. They initiated the thoughts and concepts that served them best and built a major belief in the group mind of their people that this was the salvation. We witness how this behavior is initiated then how it grows till it becomes a well-established way of thinking and those who dared defy it would face the

worst they could imagine. Needless to say, the writing style was amazing. Joe Hill is a very talented writer. His use of words and style of storytelling is more than amazing. But of course, it takes a very good writer to write a book that can be that long and still that amazing. This is a very compelling book. It's one of the books that I will dwell on for a long time.

I adored this book. I am so sad it's over and am keeping my fingers crossed a sequel might be in the making. Honestly there were some parts that were hard to get through, but it was just because I was so emotionally involved that when things started to go wrong I didn't want it to happen. I feel so deeply in love with these characters that I wanted nothing but good to happen to them, but a good author doesn't give the reader everything they want and because of that I was captivated by this book. It's the kind of book that can make you laugh, cry, and feel extremely angry all in one chapter. It will definitely frustrate you at times, but it's well worth it. I definitely recommend this book!

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