

Seraphina

By Rachel Hartman

Lyrical, imaginative, and wholly original, this *New York Times* bestseller with 8 starred reviews is not to be missed. Rachel Hartman's award-winning debut will have you looking at dragons as you've never imagined them before...

In the kingdom of Goredd, dragons and humans live and work side by side – while below the surface, tensions and hostility simmer.

The newest member of the royal court, a uniquely gifted musician named Seraphina, holds a deep secret of her own. One that she guards with all of her being.

When a member of the royal family is brutally murdered, Seraphina is drawn into the investigation alongside the dangerously perceptive—and dashing—Prince Lucien. But as the two uncover a sinister plot to destroy the wavering peace of the kingdom, Seraphina's struggle to protect her secret becomes increasingly difficult... while its discovery could mean her very life.

"Will appeal to both fans of Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* series and Robin McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown*." —*Entertainment Weekly*

"[A] lush, intricately plotted fantasy." —*The Washington Post*

"Beautifully written. Some of the most interesting dragons I've read."
—Christopher Paolini, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eragon*

From the Hardcover edition.

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Seraphina Summary Details

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editorial:

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Teen Book of the Month, July 2012: In *Seraphina*, dragons and humans maintain an uneasy peace and for a woman who is both there is nowhere to turn for acceptance--not even within herself. Seraphina has spent her young life concealing the truth of her parentage and authentic nature, a task that proves ever more difficult when she is thrust into the spotlight of the royal court. Author Rachel Hartman's dragons take human form but shun the messiness of human emotion by remaining "in ard" (a highly rational state of mind), while their counterparts cling to a dangerous assumption of species superiority. As the anniversary of the treaty between the two sides approaches, court intrigue reaches a fever pitch and hard-won truths, betrayals, and intricacies of the heart are laid bare. *Seraphina* is a beautifully complex fantasy that delves into the most basic of desires—to be loved, to belong, and to find peace in self-acceptance. --*Seira Wilson*

Guest Review by Tamora Pierce

Tamora Pierce is a best-selling author of fantasy books for teenagers. Her books, known for their teenaged girl warriors and wizards, have received critical acclaim and a strong fanbase. Her newest book, *Mastiff*, is the third book in The Legend of Beka Cooper series.

In Seraphina's world, coldly intellectual dragons can take on the shapes--and feelings--of human beings. Sometimes this results in a surprise. Seraphina's father married a beautiful musician, and discovered too late that she was a dragon. She died, leaving him with a daughter who confuses him and his new wife and children.

Now the half-dragon Seraphina is the assistant to the cranky royal music master. She is in charge of Princess Glisselda's music lessons; she books performers for the 40-year celebration of the peace treaty between dragons and humans, and she rehearses the rowdy court musicians. She has to hide the scales on her arm and around her waist, and she can never let anyone find out that Orma, her music teacher, is actually a dragon.

When she plays the solo for the funeral of the realm's murdered prince, Seraphina is suddenly raised into entirely new, visible levels of peril. People she always avoided are noticing her. She has to attend social functions, where she is caught up in court politics, between those who support the treaty and those who want to destroy it. She runs afoul of conspirators who want to start the war again--one of them may be her own grandfather. She even discovers that Prince Lucian, who is betrothed to Princess Glisselda, is not only very sharp-eyed but also very agreeable to be around. He appreciates her insights on intrigue at court and in the city and uses her as an unofficial investigator into the ongoing unrest.

The plot thickens. A new religious order plots riots and revolution. Exiled knights return to report an unregulated dragon flying near where the old prince was murdered. The dragons are trying to send Orma for corrective surgery--they think he's gotten too human and they want to cut those parts out of his brain. Seraphina fears that if she tells the prince and the princess what she is, they'll hate her forever, but their work to preserve the treaty celebrations is bringing them closer together. And all of them are terrified that the dragons will decide that humans are not worth the trouble, and will destroy them at last.

I loved this book even more the second time I read it than I did the first. The characters are interesting and engaging, and I love the new look at dragons. For all that she's half-dragon, Seraphina is a very believable human being, caught between different loyalties and just trying to keep everyone she loves alive. But don't take my word for it--read it yourself!

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up--For nearly 40 years, the treaty between the humans of Goredd and the dragons of dragonkind has held strong. Humans must not enter dragonkind territory and dragons, upon entering human lands, must take their human shape, or saarantrai. In Goredd, Seraphina's human father, a high official, needs her to stay anonymous. The dark secret that she must hide is that her mother was a dragon. Because of her musical talents, Seraphina becomes Goredd's music assistant, helping prepare for the anniversary celebration. Layers of clothing disguise the scales on her arms and stomach, but unlike dragons, her blood runs red, not silver. Also, to keep from having fainting spells in which she relives her deceased mother's experiences, Seraphina must clear her head each night. She calls the figures in her vision grotesques, and each night, she must ensure all is calm in her mind-garden. When the decapitated body of Prince Rufus is found just days before the anniversary festivities, many humans are quick to accuse a dragon of breaking the pact. Seraphina's grotesques begin acting strangely, and the whole court is investigating the murder. When the celebrations are in full swing, all hell breaks loose as the rogue dragon that killed the prince enters Goredd in his dragon form and attempts to take control. Seraphina must risk revealing her true identity (and that of her fellow hybrids) in an attempt to save the kingdom. Hartman creates a rich story layered with intriguing characters and descriptive settings. Seraphina is a complex and fully developed protagonist. Although long, this unique novel (left open for a sequel) will surely appeal to fans of Christopher Paolini's "Eragon" books (Knopf) and wherever readers enjoy fantasies.-Lauren Newman, Northern Burlington County Regional Middle School, East Columbus, NJ(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Review

A New York Times Bestseller

An Indie Bestseller

An Amazon Top 20 Teen Book of the Year

A Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Book

A Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book of the Year

A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year

A Library Journal Best Young Adult Literature for Adults Selection

A Booklist Editors' Choice

An ABA Top 10 Kids' Indie Next List Selection

An ABC New Voices Pick

Nominated for the Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction

Winner of the Cybil Award for Teen Fantasy and Science Fiction

A Publishers Weekly Flying Start Author

An ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Book

An ALA-YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults Books

Winner of the William C. Morris YA Debut Award

A YALSA Teens Top Ten Nominee

Christopher Paolini, New York Times bestselling author of Eragon:

"Beautifully written, well-rounded characters, and some of the most interesting dragons I've read in fantasy for a long while. An impressive debut novel; I can't wait to see what Rachel Hartman writes next."

Naomi Novik, New York Times bestselling author of the Temeraire series:

"A book worth hoarding, as glittering and silver-bright as dragon scales, with a heroine who insists on carving herself a place in your mind."

Tamora Pierce, New York Times bestselling author of the Beka Cooper series:

"Seraphina is strong, complex, talented--she makes mistakes and struggles to trust, with good reason, and she fights to survive in a world that would tear her apart. I love this book!"

Alison Goodman, New York Times bestselling author of Eon and Eona:

"A wonderful mix of thrilling story, fascinating characters, and unique dragonlore. I loved being in Seraphina's world!"

Ellen Kushner, World Fantasy Award-winning author:

"Just when you thought there was nothing new to say about dragons, it turns out there is, and plenty! Rachel Hartman's rich invention never fails to impress--and to convince. It's smart and funny and original, and has characters I will follow to the ends of the earth."

The Washington Post, July 3, 2012:

"Full of grace and gravitas. Readers loath to turn the last page of this lush, intricately plotted fantasy will

rejoice in the knowledge of next summer's as-yet-untitled sequel."

Entertainment Weekly.com, June 19, 2012:

"A novel that will appeal to both fans of Christopher Paolini's Eragon series and Robin McKinley's The Hero and the Crown."

io9.com, September 21, 2012:

"Seraphina makes dragons fascinating once again."

SheKnows.com, June 19, 2012:

"A beautifully-written fantasy debut about a young girl's journey to gain acceptance of herself."

Starred Review, Kirkus Reviews, June 1, 2012:

"In Hartman's splendid prose debut, humans and dragons—who can take human form but not human feeling—have lived in uneasy peace for 40 years.

The dragons could destroy the humans, but they are too fascinated by them. As musician Seraphina describes it, attempting to educate the princess, humans are like cockroaches to dragons, but interesting. As the anniversary of the treaty approaches, things fall apart: The crown prince has been murdered, anti-dragon sentiment is rising, and in the midst of it all, an awkward, gifted, observant girl unexpectedly becomes central to everything. Hartman has remixed her not-so-uncommon story and pseudo-Renaissance setting into something unexpected, in large part through Seraphina's voice. By turns pedantic, lonely, scared, drily funny and fierce, Seraphina brings readers into her world and imparts details from the vast (a religion of saints, one of whom is heretical) to the minute (her music, in beautifully rendered detail). The wealth of detail never overwhelms, relayed as it is amid Seraphina's personal journey; half-human and half-dragon, she is anathema to all and lives in fear. But her growing friendship with the princess and the princess' betrothed, plus her unusual understanding of both humans and dragons, all lead to a poignant and powerful acceptance of herself.

Dragon books are common enough, but this one is head and talons above the rest."

Starred Review, Publishers Weekly, June 6, 2012:

"In this complex, intrigue-laden fantasy, which establishes Hartman as an exciting new talent, readers are introduced to a world in which dragons and humans coexist in an uneasy truce, with dragons taking human form, dwelling among their former enemies, and abiding by a strict set of protocols. Sixteen-year-old Seraphina, assistant to the court composer, hides a secret that could have her ostracized or even killed: she's half-dragon, against all rules and social codes. Along with the distinctive scales she keeps hidden, she has a mind filled with misshapen personalities whose nature she doesn't quite grasp. As Seraphina navigates the complicated politics of a court where human-dragon relations are growing ever more fragile following a royal murder, she has to come to terms with her true nature and powers, the long-dormant memories her mother hid within her, and her growing affection for charming prince Lucian. There's a lot to enjoy in Hartman's debut, from the admirably resourceful heroine and intriguing spin on dragons to the intricately described medievaesque setting and emphasis on music and family."

Starred Review, Shelf Awareness, July 13, 2012:

"Rachel Hartman's captivating debut novel explores the pains 16-year-old Seraphina suffers as an outsider as well as the rewards of excelling in something she loves.

In medieval Lavondaville, an uneasy truce exists between dragons and humans. Narrator Seraphina is the

product of a dragon mother and a human father. Dragons can disguise themselves as humans, so everyone believes Seraphina to be entirely human. Only when Seraphina's mother died in childbirth did Seraphina's father learn her true nature. Her mother left Seraphina a gift of "mind-pearls," memories triggered by specific events, and also her talent for music. Dragons are known for their technical skill, and that, together with the empathy Seraphina gained from her human father, makes her one of the finest musicians in the land. She has won a coveted position assisting the court composer.

After the death of Prince Rufus, in a manner suspiciously like a dragon's preferred means (decapitation), tensions run high between humans and dragons. Seraphina's position at court exposes her to aspects of both dragon and human societies. When she decides to trust Prince Lucian with her suspicions about Prince Rufus's killer, they embark on a journey that tests her loyalties and strength, and also awakens Seraphina's feelings for him.

In this first of two planned books, Hartman creates a world simultaneously strange and familiar. Her dragons are as magnetic as her human characters. Teens will readily identify with Seraphina's conflicting desires: to please her family or to make her own future."

Starred Review, Booklist, May 15, 2012:

"Hartman proves dragons are still fascinating in this impressive high fantasy. Equal parts political thriller, murder mystery, bittersweet romance, and coming-of-age story, this is an uncommonly good fantasy... An exciting new series to watch."

Starred Review, The Horn Book Magazine, July/August 2012:

"To the innovative concept and high action, add Seraphina's tentative romance with Kiggs, rich language lively with humor and sprinkled with an entire psaltery of saints and an orchestra's worth of medieval instruments, and a political conspiracy aimed at breaking the dragon-human truce, and what you have is an outstanding debut from author-to-watch Hartman."

Starred Review, The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, September 2012:

"The medieval-esque world, filled with saints and dragons, is as deftly crafted as the characters themselves; Goredd has a distinct history, fraught with struggle and survival, and its residents reflect the conflicting ideologies and traditions that inform their world. Seraphina's voice--passionate, wry, and wise--easily conveys her internal battle as a half-breed: the nonchalance of her self-loathing makes her struggle for identity even more heartbreaking. Secondary characters are given just as much nuance, and the romance between Seraphina and a bastard prince proceeds with believable hesitation and wariness, given the complications it will bring to both their lives... Readers will want to plan to return to this richly developed world to see where this intricate fantasy goes next."

Starred Review, Voice of Youth Advocates:

"Reading this novel is like falling into Alice's rabbit hole and never wanting to come out. Fans of fantasy will devour this book, and with a little pushing, this novel could appeal to just about anyone who appreciates a fantastic read."

Starred Review, School Library Journal, August 1, 2012:

"Hartman creates a rich story layered with intriguing characters and descriptive settings. This unique novel will surely appeal to fans of Christopher Paolini's "Eragon" books and wherever readers enjoy fantasies."

Bookpage

"[Hartman's] world-building is so detailed and well-integrated, one wonders if they truly exist somewhere."

An engaging and innovative fantasy that uses the plights of dragons and humans as an allegory for the real prejudices we all must face.”

From the Hardcover edition.

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