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Young Adult Fiction

Firegold
Dia Calhoun
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An intriguing debut novel, Calhoun's Firegold captures the imagination as readers follow the adventure-filled story of Jonathon Brae, the unraveling of the mysterious poem about the legendary Firegold and how Jonathon and the poem are connected through the past and future.

For the first time in his life, thirteen-year-old Jonathon saw someone like himself: a girl with blue eyes. He knew from the stories that she was a Dalriada—one of the barbarians of the Red Mountains "who worshipped the sky and scorned the ways of the Valley… With their dark, magical powers, they sent nightmares and cursed crops, bringing verblight and barrenness to the land." As he races away in fear, Jonathon's mind fills with visions he does not understand, but when he trips, all is forgotten as he discovers a horse carved on a small, red stone. Upon putting it in his pocket, drumbeats pound around him as he heads toward home, wanting to warn everyone that the Dalriadas have come to the Valley.

When his father returns with a Dalriada colt named Rhohar and the Dalriadas kill his mother to take it back, Jonathon's plans to run away to the Red Mountains in search of answers about himself are crushed. When verblight strikes the orchards, however, his father and uncle take Jonathon to the North Valley to safety—away from the neighbors who blame blue-eyed Jonathon for the tree disease and want him dead. Refusing to return home with his father and uncle, Jonathon stays with his maternal grandmother, who tells him surprising things about his heritage.

Eventually going on horseback up to the Red Mountains—where he is brought to a Dalriada camp—Jonathon makes friends with those who are training for the Ridgewalk: an ordeal each child of fourteen summers must undertake alone as his rite of passage to adulthood. Jonathon survives the Ridgewalk, with the aid of the red stone, but is shocked when an Elder refuses to put the final mark of adulthood upon his chest until he "becomes whole." Only after he returns home does Jonathon realize what he must come to terms with in order to do so. Then,

and only then, can he fathom what the remainder of the Firegold poem truly means for him, the Valley people and the Dalriada.

An ideal “read-aloud-book” for teachers - with each chapter ending on a suspenseful, thought-provoking note—or an excellent solo escape, this coming-of-age story will give inspiration and courage to those nine to fourteen.

Nelly Heitman