

VERNOR VINGE

A *FIRE* UPON

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A Fire Upon the Deep

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Vernor Vinge



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This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this novel are either fictitious or are used fictitiously.

A FIRE UPON THE DEEP

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I am very grateful to James R. Frenkel for the wonderful job of editing he has done with this book.

Thanks to Poul Anderson for the quote that I use as the motto of the Qeng Ho.

During the summer of 1988, I visited Norway. Many things I saw there influenced the writing of this story. I am very grateful to: Johannes Berg and Heidi Lyshol and the Aniara Society for showing me Oslo and for wonderful hospitality; the organizers of the Arctic '88 distributed systems course at the University of Tromsø, in particular Dag Johansen. As for Tromsø and the surrounding lands: I had not dreamed that so pleasant and beautiful a place could exist in the arctic.

Science Fiction has imagined many alien creatures; this is one of the genre's great charms. I don't know what in particular inspired me to make the Riders in this novel, but I do know that Robert Abernathy wrote about a similar race in his short story, "Junior" (*Galaxy*, January 1956). "Junior" is a beautiful commentary on the spirit of life.

[Added in 2002: I'm grateful to Brad Templeton for suggesting, way back in 1993, that the annotated version of the manuscript should be published. Thanks also to various members of the USENET science-fiction community for encouraging republication of the annotated version in 2002.

Thanks to Jeff Gomez of St. Martin's Press for shepherding this republication, and to Ken Brooks of Publishing Dimensions for transforming my flat ascii into the forms used here.]

Dedication

To my father, Clarence L. Vinge, with love.

— V. V.

Behind the Scenes of *A Fire Upon the Deep*

[This introduction was originally written in 1993, before the rise of the Web. I have edited the intro somewhat, but I don't think I have changed any technological prognostications.]

A Primitive Form of Story Documentation

Since 1979 I've used the manuscript convention that lines beginning with “^” should not normally be printed. This makes it easy for me to “comment my text”. Over the years, as storage capacities increased, I found that even this extremely crude tactic could be very helpful in story development. About one fourth of my *Fire Upon the Deep* manuscript is such hidden commentary. These comments served a variety of purposes, and I used various tag words to discriminate between these purposes (see the table below). Besides formal tags, I had a large number of key words to identify different aspects of the story. I used several tools — mainly grep — to follow the key words around the manuscript. Note that this technique is not hypertext (... well, maybe it could be called a “manual form” of hypertext, with grep being used to dynamically compute links :-).

In 1993, Brad Templeton of Clarinet published a CDROM, *Hugo and Nebula Anthology 1993*, that included a version of this annotated manuscript. (And this introduction is only slightly modified from the one in that CDROM.) I think the annotated manuscript was fun for people who wanted to look behind the scenes at a story as it is being constructed. I'm happy that it will see the light of day again!

In preparing the manuscript notes for publication, I tried to extend and clean up the notes. However, I want to warn you that since these are mainly internal development notes, they are often cryptic, repetitive, and inconsistent. (The notes are also tentative in the sense that they may be contradicted by later-written sequels and prequels.) There are interesting things in these notes, but you can get lost in the tedium of minor issues or be led astray by discussion of problems that were later solved (leaving the discussion without referent!). Hopefully, this introduction will make it more convenient for people who do want to look at the notes.