Firestarter
by Donna Marino

Stephen King's newest novel, Firestarter, involves a secretive government agency and a young child with psychic abilities, to create a spine tingling chiller.

The story centers on a young couple, Andy and Vicky, who meet at a drug rehab center. They have volunteered to be human guinea pigs for an experiment called Lot 6, run by a government agency called The Shop. They want to test a mild hallucinogenic drug they assure everyone is safe.

Little does this young couple know that hardly anything is known of this drug or its effects on people. The proof comes in the horrible results of the experiment, during which one subject tears his eyes out, while another lapses into a coma. Many of these subjects eventually die or go insane, but the project is hushed up.

As the story progresses, Vicky and Andy marry and realize that as a result of the drug, they possess certain mental powers. Vicky finds she can open doors by looking at them and concentrating, while Andy, whose powers are stronger, can push people to make them believe or see certain things by willing to do so.

Soon Andy has uncovered a man who also possesses a strange but dangerous talent; she is able to set objects or people on fire by concentrating on them. As a child, she sets her bedclothes and stuffed animals on fire because she is later with her bottle and she becomes angry. When she is upset or impatient, her pyrokinesis is unleashed like a fury, and anyone around her could be its victim.

With discipline from her parents, she learns to control her habit, but the ability to lash out remains within her. She lives even now with a worry to her parents when they discover they've been under surveillance by The Shop who wants Charlie for her special powers.

One day when Andy, an English teacher, is at school, he has a strange feeling that things are not quite right. Andy concentrates with his pyrokinesis, and the object on fire hits him in the forehead. McKillip has woven a complex story, filled with unbelievable twists and turns.

The books concern Frobo, a hobbit, who has inherited the evil Lord Sauron's Ring of Power, and goes on a quest to destroy the Ring and save Middle Earth. The trilogy is lengthy, but well worth reading. Both children and adults will enjoy it.

Dune, by Frank Herbert, is a masterpiece in science fiction. It won both the Hugo and the Nebula's highest honors. The first of a trilogy, this book concerns Paul Atreides, the planet Arrakis, or Dune. There he meets the Fremen, and becomes Muad'Dib, the Fremen messiah. It is the first book about the beginning of the Atreides dynasty and is filled with political intrigue and philosophy. Excellent reading for our older and older, but children will find it too difficult to comprehend.

The next book in the series, The Mutiny on the Meridian, by Patricia McKillip, is the first book of a trilogy concerning Morgan of Hed, a simple farmer who goes on a quest to find the riddle of why he bears three stars on his forehead. McKillip has woven a magnificent puzzle that takes three books to solve, and completely captures your heart and mind while you try to figure it out. Again, don't buy this one for the kiddies, but your friends will love it.

Lord Foul's Bane, by Stephen M. Donaldson, is the story of Thomas Covenant, a famous author who gets leprous. He is unwillingly transferred into the Land, and must solve the mystery of the white gold which he bears, so that he may defeat Lord Foul, the Despiser (evil incarnate). The only way Covenant can keep his sanity is by believing that the Land is a dream, hence his title. In the Land, he travels to his old neighborhood in the Bronx.

The final split occurs when Beverley, Robbins' wife, suggests separate vacations. This leaves Robbins alone to sit around the house all day watching game shows, drinking beer, and sleeping. In a desperate attempt to break free of his depression, he sets off to his old neighborhood in the Bronx.

The shop complex down, killing everyone in it, in an attempt to get revenge for all they did to her and her family. At the story's end, she is alone and is about to be pursued again, but this time she will not be taken. Before anyone can harm her, she takes her story to a newspaper so that everyone can know of her plight.

Although King gives his characters special powers in almost all his novels, like The Shining and The Durl Zone, he also places them in realistic situations that make the stories seem all the more believable and frightening. As he tells us about the secret maze of The Shop and their widespread power, we feel as though this is something that could be happening right now. Except in King's novel, the theme that good will triumph over evil will come to those who wait is predominant.

All the major characters in the novel are well-developed and almost all are interesting—even the evil ones. Charlie was especially lively and real as the child who is frightened, yet awed, by the power within her. She is concerned about not hurting people, afraid that once she unleashes her power, she'll never be able to stop. Her headstrong nature and stubborn will are the qualities that carry her through to victory.

Andy McGee was also convincing as her father who runs with her because he doesn't want to see her caged up like an animal in an experiment. He progresses in the novel from a fighter to a thinker, using his special power to 'push' people, rather than just running. Rainbird, the villain fascinated by death and killing, is a character who admires and falls in love with 9-year-old Charlie's inner strength and will. He tries to trick her by getting her to her side, but suffers from her revenge when she finds out he has betrayed her.

Like his past novels, King combines just enough reality with the extraordinary events and comes up, once again, with a winner.