



## 'Firestarter Review': The Remake's Flame Doesn't Get Enough Time To Grow Into The Entertaining Fire It Could Be

Posted by Murjani Rawls | May 13, 2022 | Film Reviews, Movies, Peacock, Reviews, Streaming TV | [🔗](#) | ★★★★★



It's no secret that Stephen King's novels and horror on the big and small screens have had varying degrees of success — even with various adaptations of the same stories. Look at *Carrie*, *It*, *The Shining*, and *The Stand* — sometimes, the visual example builds upon the lore of the tales, and others, don't get quite get things right. King's 1980 novel, *Firestarter*, a story about a little girl discovering her power of pyrokinesis while her family is on the run from a shady government entity, received the theatrical treatment in 1984. The famed author compared the film to “cafeteria mashed potatoes,” While Director Mark L. Lester was loyal to the source material, the campiness of the time and pacing damped the film.

This leads us to 2022, where *Firestarter* goes at a furious pace to get to the bombast without taking the time to get the audience to get comfortable with its on-screen characters. Charlie (Ryan Kiera Armstrong) is a young girl who keeps to herself and sometimes is the subject of bullying at school. Most of it doesn't derive from her choosing. Her parents, Andy (Zac Efron) and Vicky (Sydney Lemmon), don't keep a smart device or Wi-Fi in the house — attributing the commission to “rotting kids' brains.” However, they both are keeping a secret from her. When Andy and Vicky were in college, the government questioned them about their telekinetic abilities and given an experimental hallucinogenic drug called Lot 6.

The family has been on the run out of fear of a shady entity known as “The Shop” ever since then — out of worry of what they would do to Charlie. But Charlie goes through changes, hinting at something growing inside her. It comes to the push and pulls of a dealing message from Andy and Vicky — Andy elects for Charlie to stuff down her pyro abilities, nicknaming it the bad thing, while Vicky wants her to learn how to control it. It's a setup with potential, highlighting an 11-year-old girl trying to parse through complex emotions and parents who have different ways of dealing with the power they won't be able to control. Director Keith Thomas and writer Scott Teems try to add some emotional heart to a straightforward novel.

It's why the film becomes frustrating in seeing a lot of story potential left by the wayside because *Firestarter* concerns itself with getting to the apex of the third act. The collected family trauma of keeping their identities secret, how Charlie has to learn things on her own, her being bombarded with information affects her, and even why some characters convert or fear Charlie's potential is given the bare minimum to grow.

*Firestarter's* antagonist, Captain Hollister (Gloria Reuben), wants to take Charlie to harness her abilities to their fullest potential. However, the film doesn't lay out what they are, other than Hollister's dialogue with Charlie later about being the only person who could. This is against the wishes of Dr. Joseph Wanless (Kurtwood Smith), who created Lot 6 and provided an omen saying Charlie will “one day she will destroy us all.” Thomas provides some stakes and suspense as an ex-test subject/bounty hunter named John Rainbird (Michael Greyeyes), whom Hollister hires to track down Charlie and her parents. Greyeyes and John Carpenter's phenomenal 80s-tinged score provides some much-needed tension.

Even there, the film has a theme of getting muddled in what Charlie is supposed to be. Some view her as impending danger, while others view Charlie as someone who can be a savior when she gets older. Charlie, herself has hints of struggling with the morality that Andy imparts to her, which is questionable given his backstory. When the action scenes come to serve this plot point, it doesn't hit as hard as they should. So much time has passed since the 1984 version, where homages of that time merged with horror have already been done. Unfortunately, it doesn't leave much room for this particular story to operate.

**Photo Credit: Universal Pictures**

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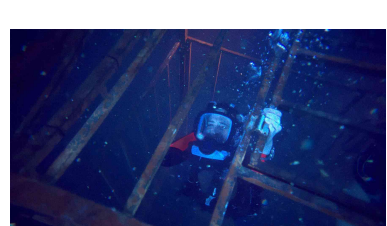


#### Murjani Rawls

Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host of The War Report and The Deadscreen Podcast, and photographer since 2014, Murjani "MJ" Rawls has been stretching his capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.



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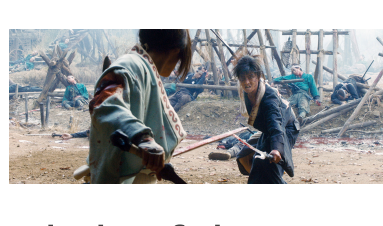
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