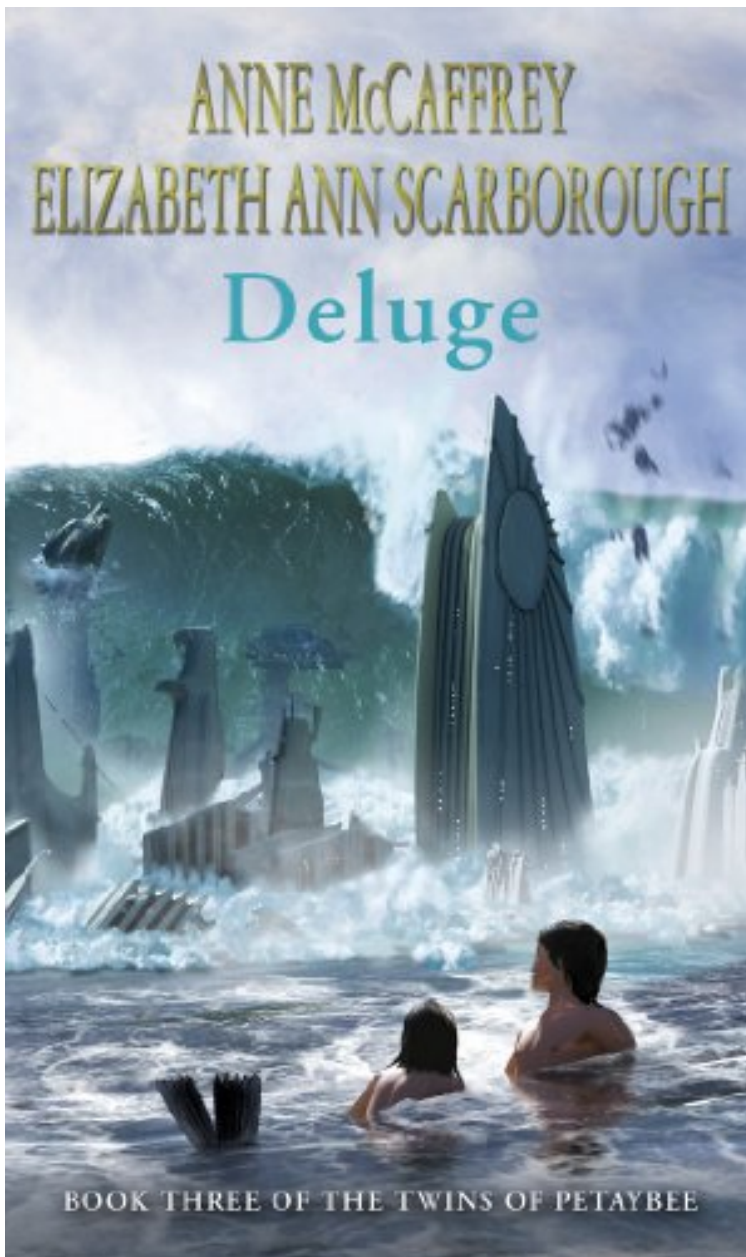


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Deluge



Par Anne McCaffrey, Elizabeth Ann Scarborough
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn Deluge the selkie twins, Ronan and Murel, leave Petaybee on a mission to help rescue their friend Marmie, who has been falsely arrested on the orders of a corrupt Colonel. However, the Colonel has more power in the Company than they realized and they end up being imprisoned themselves and taken to the Gwinnet Incarceration Colony. There they have to try to evade the clutches of their old adversary Dr Mabou, an unscrupulous scientist who wants to study their unusual shape-changing ability, and

doesn't care how much pain her experiments cause them. Meanwhile, the powerful and avaricious Company is making another attempt to take over the world of Petaybee for its resources, and the twins parents, Yana and Sean, along with the entire planet, must fight for the independence of their sentient world once and for all...ExtraitChapter OneThe sentient world Petaybee, its northern continent blanketed in snow, appeared deceptively serene. Cold enough to freeze a sneeze in midair, but peaceful beneath its dark sky, it seemed an easy target for the troops whose arrival disturbed that peace. Although they knew that the people in the village of Kilcoole were hostile and armed, the Company Corps soldiers did not worry unduly about resistance. Their landing was unannounced and they believed unexpected, so their superiors were confident that the soldiers could simply storm into house after house, waking the villagers and hauling them from their beds while they were still befuddled by sleep. Instead, the soldiers were the ones who were befuddled as they slammed open unlocked door after unlocked door to find vacant unheated rooms with ice frosting the inside walls. Wild animals darted down the street or across it but no domestic beasts or human beings remained in the village. The sergeant in charge of the ground mission regarded the village suspiciously. Fan out and search but be damned careful, he ordered. These people are hunters. They wont be far and theyll be watching us. He returned to his flitter, kept running and warm by the driver, and called the captain on the com. Theyd hoped the blade of the Petaybean winter would still be a few weeks away but it seemed they were out of luck. Much of their equipment would be useless now with the extreme cold. Theyre gone, sir. I doubt that, Sergeant, the officer replied. They must have been warned. Now well have to pursue them outside the village on their own turf. Ill consult High Command. Meanwhile, search the houses and see what intelligence you can gather. The governors mansion is a log cabin at the end of the street nearest the river. Seize records of any kind, books, computers, storage chips anything. If they make grocery lists in this godforsaken hole, I want those too. Governor Shongili has a laboratory west of the village, according to our sources. Search that in the same manner. Yes, sir. Then you can make a bonfire out of the place. With respect, sir, if we do that we lose the chance to catch them when they try to return home. Its minus ninety degrees Fahrenheit, Sergeant. If they cant return home, theyll have to show themselves to seek other shelter. Once the village is leveled, well search the surrounding villages and see if theyre hiding there. Yes, sir, the sergeant said. But as they fanned out to search the houses, snow began falling. It wasnt supposed to be possible for snow to fall at such extreme temperatures, but this weird world was a law unto itself, or so the residents seemed to believe. As if it wasnt cold enough already, a killing wind began to drive the falling snow into the soldiers thermal-masked faces, into the open doorways, scraping huge drifts from the piles on the ground and flinging them against the houses. The sky grew white too, and within moments the sergeant couldnt see his own mitten when he put it in front of his face. Take cover, he yelled, and maybe his troops did, but his voice was blown away on the wind. Less than three miles away but nearly a half mile underground, the occupants of Kilcoole were awakening. Clodagh, the communitys shanachiestoryteller, wise woman, and native healer was wide-awake, sitting with her back and hands flat against the caves sides, her buttocks and feet flat against the floor. Self-appointed disciples of the planet and would-be students of Clodaghs Brothers Shale and Granite, and Sister Igneous Rock watched her, trying to feel what she was feeling. Yanaba Maddock-Shongili, co-governor of Petaybee and former colonel in the Company Corps, opened one eye and looked up at Clodagh. Shed been up half the previous night plotting with Marmion de Revers Algemeines employees: Captain Johnny Green, the skipper of Marmies ship the Piaf; Petula Chan, Marmies security chief; and Raj Norman, a well-armed associate of uncertain status. Also included in their group was helicopter pilot Rick OShay, a former officer in the Corps, like Yana, but a native Petaybean as well. When she finally turned in, the twins and Sean were all sleeping near her. Now none of them were there. Where? she asked Clodagh and the rock flock, as Petaybees worshipful admirers had been dubbed by the other inhabitants. Seans sister Sinead and her partner Aisling had just entered the communion cave from the outer chamber. Theyre here, Sinead announced tensely, but Yana knew she was not referring to her family. The Company Corps, once more under hostile leadership, had landed with the intention of arresting her and her family and most of the villagers as well. Although it was now widely known that a Petaybean adapted by the planet to its extreme climate could not long survive offworld, the authorities responsible for Marmions arrestabduction really intended to take the rest of the Petaybeans to Gwinnet Incarceration Colony to join their friend. When? Yana asked. A few minutes ago. Is that where Sean went? No, hes gone to round up your kids. Aisling said they decided to go for an early morning swim to the coast. Yana swore an unmotherly oath beneath her breath. Her childrens selkie seal side was a great trial to her and, with increasing frequency, a source of not just worry, but of anxiety that bordered on terror for their safety. She had thought the planet

was giving her a gift when it healed the cause of her infertility and allowed her to have the twins when she was well into her forties. Obviously she had offended it in some way for it to have afflicted her with such an unruly lot of semiwild animals for progeny. Their father, much as she loved him, was often no better. And

now they had all broken cover and were out there in harms way in places where she could not hope to follow. Clodagh said, Sean will be fine, Yana. Coaxtl and Nanook went with him to guard him if he comes to shore. And the kids? Yana hated to ask. Gone, Clodagh said. Sean didnt reach them in time. Gone? You mean . . . ? I mean gone. The children have left the planet. The deep sea otters city-ship ascended into the sky from

the depths of the Petaybean sea. Though the vessels departure for space seemed more controlled than the previous ones, which had displaced the waters to catastrophic effect, its upward spin still created a vortex in the seabed from which it rose. Salt drops fell from the invisible force field that formed its hull, showering

down on the furry, round faces of the sea otters and the sleek brown heads of the river otters watching it rise. In seal form, Murel and Ronan watched first the otters, then the sea, and finally Petaybee grow smaller

as the city-vessel left Petaybees space. The twins watched from the dome in the sursurvu, through which Kushtaka had once monitored the sea life around her city. Kushtaka was the leader of the occupants of the city-ship, a colony of an ancient race of nonhuman shape shifters best known to their fellow sea creatures as

deep sea otters. The view from the sursurvua network of surveillance devices deployed by the aliens in the vicinity of their ship was more impressive than from the viewscreen of the regular spaceships in which the twins had previously traveled. From the chambers dome they could watch the faint lightening of the sky as

they climbed higher into it. Somewhere below them in the black sea, icebergs still churned round and round in the whirlpool created by the wake of the city-vessels spin. They saw Petaybee as they had never seen it before in those few brief moments before they left the atmosphere and entered space. The volcanos red hot

lava was visible even from very high up, and more surprising, they saw several other bulging domes thrusting out of the water to the south and east to form a ridge beyond the original volcanic cone. Their

entire northern continent was pure white, but the southern one had not yet had its first snow. Once they were in space, it was much like being inside the city underwater, except that the vastness was far greater, deeper,

and seemingly uninhabited. Being aboard the city-vessel was also a lot like being in another sort of spaceship, except for the all-encompassing view afforded by the transparency of the shield. A bit unsettling, that, Ronan remarked in his thoughts to his sister, his eyes widening as he tried to twist his thick furry neck

to take in the scenery. Sky, the twins otter friend, ran from one side of the domed sursurvu chamber to the other until he finally flopped down between his friends flippers and said in a rather sad voice, Otters who are

not me and not deep sea are gone now. Murel nuzzled him with her nose. You could have stayed behind, Sky. Sky otters go where river seals go, he told her. As Petaybee seemed to shrink with distance, Murel and Ronan continued to watch, while Sky curled up for a nap. The twins thoughts spun as the vessel had when

rising. They were not yet eleven years old and this was their third journey into space on behalf of their family and their world. This one promised to make the other two trips seem likewell, childs play. Explanations about why they had to be the ones to go were unnecessary this time. Even the river and sea

otters, who normally cared only about swimming, sliding, and catching fish, had sensed the urgency of their need and sent messengers to the chilly waters of Perfect Fjord to summon the creatures they considered to be

large otterly cousins. Kushtakas species had lived on Petaybee when it flourished the first time, before the Company Corps terraforming that had made the planet barely habitable for the twins paternal ancestors. Like the humans, the deep sea otters were originally immigrants from another world, and like Ronan and Murel,

they could assume another shapeone vaguely squidlike, which the twins couldnt help thinking of as alien. Their city was also designed as a sea- and spacefaring vessel. Once the twins had explained their urgent need

for transport, since no other spaceworthy vessels were left on Petaybee, the aliens agreed to take them to Versailles Station, Marmions home base. Once there, they hoped to alert Marmies powerful friends to her illegal arrest, so the important people could make the company release her. After all, Marmie was on the companys board and had a large financial interest in it. She also was an influential member of the Federation

Council. *Revue de presse* The suspense is palpable, the pace is breathtaking, and the interspecies interactions are engaging. *Booklist* The collaborative effort by veterans McCaffrey and Scarborough brings together two consummate storytellers in an adventure suitable for both YA and adult audiences. *Library Journal* Magnificent . . . a glorious conclusion. *SFRevu*