

RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 24, 2015

J.M. FREY SIGNS THREE BOOK DEAL WITH HIGHLY ANTICIPATED META-FANTASY SERIES

Sci-Fi/Fantasy

J.M. Frey's THE UNTOLD TALE, THE RETURNED TALE, and THE FINAL TALE, pitched as Inkheart for adults, a meta-epic fantasy tale bends the traditional role of gender in fantasy and twists the idea of what it means to be a true hero while offering a fun read, to [Kisa Whipkey](#) at [Reuts](#), in a nice deal, for publication in 2015 and 2016, by [Laurie McLean](#) at [Fuse Literary](#) (World English).
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Photo by Jim Tinios

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Award-winning spec-fic author J.M. Frey is back. With the announcement of her sophomore novel, *The Untold Tale*, Frey has blown back onto the Science Fiction and Fantasy scene with a sophisticated, cheeky, and thoughtful character study wrapped in an epic high fantasy novel. Fergus, Ontario-resident Frey talks about what her new, highly-anticipated series is about, where it came from, and what it all means.

First off, *The Untold Tale*, book one of *The Accidental Turn Series*, ain't your grandpa's fantasy. Frey, who has never written in the centre of any genre she's adopted for her novels, prefers to push the boundaries of the norm. "What's the point of rehashing the same sorts of narratives?" she asks. "Other people have already done the space opera, or the violent alien invasion, or the sword and sorcery fantasy, or the heroic steampunk fighter pilot. There's no need for me to tread those paths again. I'd rather walk the fringes."

And walk the fringes Frey does. As in her debut novel *Triptych*, the narrator of the tale isn't the main character. In *Triptych*, the story focussed on Gwen, a Canadian linguist working for a government organization, but the titular three narrators were Evvie, Gwen's mother, Basil, Gwen's husband, and Kalp, her lover. In *The Untold Tale*, the story is told not from the point of view of the enchanted-sword wielding fantasy hero, but his stammering, shy, slightly podgy younger brother.

"I love to tell stories from a perspective that is just on the rim of the action," Frey admits. "History is written by the victors, they say, which has always made me wonder how the losers would tell it. Or the victor's personal assistant or dog-walker. How is the same tale told when it's being related by someone who isn't in the center of it? Someone who isn't the hero?"

For all that *The Untold Tale* happens in a fantastical world, complete with maps and a complex culture and history like J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth or George R.R. Martin's Westeros, the emphasis of the book isn't on the locations, the creatures, or the battles. Frey is trying, she says, to move beyond that, to take the next step in the evolution of the genre.

The Accidental Turn Series was not created to attack the works of Tolkien, Jordan, or Martin, but rather to comment on them. "These great classic fantasy books, they gave us what it means to write modern western fantasy, and what it means to be a fantasy writer. I am the next generation of writer, the one who grew up on the work of the generations that came before me, who were influenced by the generations who came before them. With each generation, it's the artist's responsibility to enter into a dialogue with what came before. That's how you get expressionism and cubism out of the work of the romantics. This is my reply."

Feminist and game reviewer Liana K. says that Frey's new work is vital because it "shines a light on what conventional fantasy stories do to women: we fall in love with them of our own volition, then they figuratively 'rape' us by showing, again and again, that we are inherently less. We are trophies. We must wear pretty dresses -- or perhaps very little -- and, going back to Tolkien, if we do otherwise, it is a minor tragedy or a casualty of war. When we are permitted to be warriors, it's of the silly 'chainmail bikini' type, which is a visual metaphors that female warriors are just for show, or for conquest, or for a hero's trophy." Heavy stuff.

"It's not a light subject," Frey agrees. "But the book isn't without humour, mostly at the expense of the blundering warrior-hero, and it is also not without tenderness. Forsyth, the book's narrator, is a genuinely good, smart man who's just never had a break. He is whip-smart, but he's been overshadowed by his hero big brother his whole life. He is, in essence, the geek everyman. And he finds his own power," Frey says. "He doesn't transform into a muscle-bound sword-waving hero. Instead he finds his own heroism in his own strengths, in his own way. He doesn't transform so much as finally begins to fill his own skin. And his biggest strength is in how he doesn't see the women around him as lesser, especially the women of colour, like his adventuring partner Lucy Piper."

Of course, the rest of the humour comes from the pretense of the book-within-a-book. Forsyth is younger brother to the titular hero of an eight-book fantasy series written in the 1980s and early 90s called *The Tales of Kintyre Turn*, penned by American writer Elgar Reed.

"There is no such series, of course," Frey explains. "I had to make up all that, too. And I did a lot of research to make it as realistic as possible. Things like what kind of fantasy was being written in the 80s in North America, and what sorts of allegories they were filled with, that kind of thing. I really wanted it to seem as if the world that Forsyth comes from is an actual, honest to goodness book series. And it was really, honestly, a *lot* of fun."

The conceit goes so far that Elgar Reed, the faux author of *The Tales of Kintyre Turn*, has his own social media feeds – maintained by Frey and the Reuts marketing team together – and has already amassed fan fiction and fan art. Frey also plans to write two novellas set within the confines of *The Tales of Kintyre Turn* which she'll publish online, but she also invites fans to dive into the world of Kintyre and his sidekick Bevel Dom, and create tales of their own interpretations of what happened in her fantasy world before *The Untold Tale* began. "I've written the back cover copy and named the eight *The Tales of Kintyre Turn* books, which should give people a great head start," Frey says. "And Reuts is working on giving them covers!"

So Frey is fine with fan fiction, fan art, and cosplay based on her works?

"I better be!" Frey says. "That's where I started, as a writer. Writing *Dracula: The Series* and *Sailor Moon* fan fiction in the nineties. I love conventions. I *adore* cosplaying. Okay,. So this is super geeky, but I'm so proud that the single most talked about thing that I've ever done on the internet is a Steampunk Victorian TARDIS dress that I designed and modeled. It even lights up!" The photos of that particular cosplay gown have garnered over twenty thousand notes, comments, and reblogs on the social media website Tumblr alone.

Speaking of fan fiction and adaptations, book-based shows seem to be all the rage on film and television these days, with science fiction and fantasy stories reigning supreme. The Marvel Cinematic Universe, *The Hunger Games*, *Game of Thrones*, *Outlander*, *Flash Forward*, *Ender's Game*, and *Harry Potter* are just some of the adapted properties that have been massive hits in the last decade. Is there a franchise in Frey's future?

“I hope so!” she laughs. “Every author wants their book to be the Next Big Thing, but honestly, you can’t think like that. My job is to tell a story, and to tell the best damn story I can tell, in the medium I’m working in. Would I love to see *The Untold Tale* as a TV series? Absolutely! It means I could share my tales with even more people, all over the world.”

But realistically?

“If *The Untold Tale* does as well, critically, as *Triptych* did, I’ll be very pleased,” Frey admits. “Obviously every author wants millions of sales and best-seller status and film adaptations. But I also feel that it’s important that people *get* what I’m doing with the book.”

It’s pretty safe to say that readers *get* her work. *Triptych*, Frey’s debut, is a science fiction tale set in the near future and featuring polyamorous bisexual aliens, was nominated for a CBC Bookie, two Lambda Literary awards, was named one of the top overlooked books in 2011 by *The Advocate*, and received both a starred review and a place on the coveted Best Books of 2011 list from *Publishers Weekly*.

But it has been a long haul, and four even longer years between *Triptych* and *The Untold Tale*. “That happens,” Frey explains. “I signed *Triptych* unagented, and after it came out I worked at finding the right representation for me, and my agent, in turn, has worked very hard at finding the proper homes for my books. I can’t say enough wonderful things about Laurie McLean or the team at Fuse. I also can’t say enough about Reuts Publications. They are small now, but you just watch – this publishing house has got some jetfuel in their engines. I absolutely see Reuts becoming the new Quirk, or ChiZine.”

And what else was Frey doing in those four years between publications? “I’ve been published in a half dozen short-story anthologies, put out my own micro-collection of short stories, acted in two a web series, did some voice acting, and took my first foray into writing comics with two stories in the *Toronto Comic Anthology vol 2*. Oh, and there was some short stories and a novel under my pseudonym. I don’t like to be idle.”

Well *that* is an understatement! And what’s next for Frey?

“Besides writing two wrist-cracker novels by the end of 2015?” she laughs. “Well, there’s the possibility of a webseries in the new year. I’ve been in communication with a production company. I promised to try to write the first draft of the script by Christmas. I won’t be acting in it, though; I don’t think I’d ever enjoy acting in something I’ve written because I don’t think I’d have the ability to keep from keeping my mouth shut and let the director do their job. Although, I’d like a cameo! After that, there’s another three-book deal in the pipeline. I’m very excited about that one because I wrote Book One in 2012. I’m pumped to get back into that world, and to figure out who these characters are, and if they’ve changed at all in the three years since I last spent time with them. Oh! And I get to be in a non-fiction anthology called *The Secret Loves of Geek Girls* with Margaret Atwood in December! That’s brilliant. That’s pretty much the tops for me.”

And when does she plan to sleep?

“Good question,” Frey says, and then seems to ponder, blue eyes twinkling with mirth. “The second week of July 2018, I think. I’ll pencil it in now.”

CONTACT and SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION

- More Promotional Images may be found at <http://www.jmfrey.net/about>
- *The Untold Tale* book cover reveal will be in Fall 2015.
- Advance Reader Copies of the book are available through Reuts Publications (marketing@reuts.com) upon request.
- J.M. Frey is available for interviews.

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ABOUT THE ACCIDENTAL TURN SERIES

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An epic fantasy meta-narrative about megafan Pip, who wakes up in the novel series that she's loved since being a teenager. However, the world is darker, and far more dangerous than she could have ever predicted, especially as the hero is a bigger misogynistic ass than she knew. *The Accidental Trilogy* chronicles the adventures of Pip in a world whose tropes, clichés, pitfalls and loopholes she can predict and circumnavigate, and what happens when she pulls the characters outside of the comfort of the fantasy world for which they were written.

Master Forsyth Turn isn't a hero. He's never wanted to be one, either; not since his older brother Kintyre found the enchanted sword Foemiter and waltzed away from his family, his estate, and his responsibilities to become one – and dumped all of his responsibilities on Forsyth.

And then, raiding the castle of a wanted criminal, Forsyth's men rescue Lucy Piper. A bafflingly blunt woman, oddly named and even more oddly mannered, Lucy Piper claims to know things about Kintyre and Forsyth's lives that she can't possibly be privy to. She crashes into Forsyth's quaintly sedentary life like an errant comet and before he knows it, she has him convinced that he is the only man who can join her on her quest to find a magical gateway back to her far-away home. She drags Forsyth into the kind of adventure that only his brother could have imagined, testing his mettle and forcing Forsyth to confront his own self-shame and the demons, and the bullying that had characterized his childhood. But the Viceroy, Kintyre's arch-

nemesis, is after Lucy Piper and her magical gateway as well. And the truth of why threatens the stability of the whole Kingdom... Perhaps even their whole world.

Lucy Piper might be able to convince Forsyth that he can be a hero, but is it really his fate to defeat the one villain that even the great Kintyre Turn has never managed to best?

ADVANCE REVIEWS

“INSANELYAMAZING! The Untold Tale tears apart the tropes of heroic fantasy and gives back what we need: true heroes, true love, and the astonishing realization that yes, real people are magical.”

--Julie Czerneda, Author of *A Turn of Light & A Play of Shadow*; Prix Aurora Award winner

“I started reading *Untold Tale*, and was captivated. This superb novel grabbed me from the opening sentence, and never let go.

The very best fantasy stories show us fresh new settings in which deeds and events *matter*—but first and foremost, they give us colorful, captivating characters we fall in love with, or love to hate, or are fascinated by. *The Untold Tale* does all of this, and more. We see someone from a world we know plunged into a world that is strange to us, through the eyes of that unfamiliar world.

And we care what happens to her, and to everyone we meet in *Untold Tale's* pages. And the whole tale is several clever twists on the oh-so-familiar fantasies we've read before.

I want more. *Books more*”.

--Ed Greenwood, *Forgotten Realms & The Edverse*

“I highly recommend JM Frey's *The Untold Tale*. It's easily the strongest manuscript I've read in the last year. Frey's novel takes a familiar trope – the idea that every novel written creates an actual world that the reader can enter, and it's corollary, that we might be living in such a world ourselves – and gives us an entirely new take on it. Usually, this type of story is told from the point of view of the real world character, who finds herself a "stranger in a strange land" in the book she's reading.

In *The Untold Tale*, however, we have the entirely fresh perspective of the story being told by one of the fictional characters. This character discovers not only that the world he inhabits isn't entirely the world he imagined it to be, but that he himself is not the person he always assumed he was. The real-world character, on the other hand, discovers that even a deep understanding of a fictional world isn't as much practical use as she'd thought it would be.

The fictional world = real world trope isn't the only one Frey twists, however. She also plays with the ideas of the hero and heroic adventure, feminism, gender roles, and the role of the narrative itself, in innovative – and occasionally cheeky – ways.

[...] This novel has the potential to appeal to a great many readers, across genres. Think Robert J. Weirsema's *Bedtime Story*.”

--Violette Malan, PhD, *The Shadowlands Series*

“John Scalzi did Redshirts. He poked fun at a beloved symbol of geekdom, and we loved it. Frey has done the same for the sacred fantasy tropes and it's fantastic. An empowered

woman of color, thrown into the chauvinistic world of the epic fantasy today's geeks were weaned on, serves as the perfect narrator for a critical and wonderful look at fantasy in the modern world.”

-- Leah Petersen, author of *The Physics of Falling* trilogy