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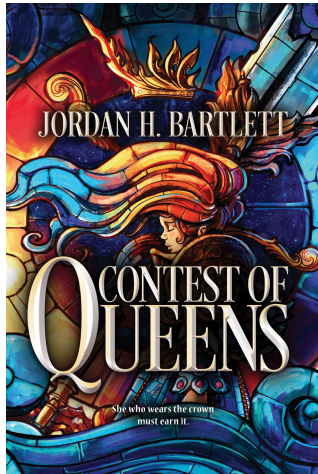
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Jordan H. Bartlett Creates a Powerful Queendom That Challenges Historical Literary Tropes

“Contest of Queens” Explores a Fantasy World with Empowering Female Roles

BANFF, Alberta—in her debut novel, Jordan H. Bartlett creates a fantasy Queendom that will entice readers while it asks “what if” and subverts historical and literary tropes. Growing up, Jordan read books about boys for boys. She struggled to find that strong female heroine that she could relate to. Therefore, while working towards her English degree, Jordan focused her studies on children’s literature and the role of women in literature throughout history. Her affinity for fairy tales mixed with her desire to breathe life into compelling, unique, and ultimately flawed female characters led her to create a world where females are the default gender. In *Contest of Queens* (CamCat Books January 18, 2022), Jordan H. Bartlett aims to empower young adult readers while creating a powerful Queendom.



Contest of Queens follows Jacs, an inventor’s apprentice from the Lower Realm, who defies gravity to befriend Prince Cornelius of the Upper Realm. The strength of their bond overcomes realm-related prejudice. But when the old feud in the Queendom of Frea reignites, Jacs must earn her place to compete in the Contest of Queens to prove that a Queendom is strongest when united.

JORDAN H. BARTLETT holds degrees in Psychology, English, and a Master's of Science degree in Speech and Language Pathology. When she is not writing, Bartlett works as a Speech Language Pathologist and is a certified yoga instructor. Any other free time is spent hiking, biking, and kayaking in the mountains and lakes of her backyard. She has devoured literature all her life and is honored to add to the world's library. Find more information about Jordan H. Bartlett along with her short stories and art for *Contest of Queens* at <https://jordanhbartlett.com>.



“Contest of Queens”

Jordan H. Bartlett | January 18, 2022 | CamCat Books

Hardcover ISBN 9780744304985 | \$24.99

Paperback (Large Print Edition) ISBN 9780744304640 | \$19.99

eBook ISBN 9780744304657 | \$9.99

Audiobook ISBN 9780744304718 | \$19.95

Young Adult Fantasy

In an Interview, JORDAN H. BARTLETT Can Discuss:

- The significance of matriarchies in YA literature
- Development of gender role reversals
- Subverting classic literary tropes
- Crafting powerful female protagonists
- The research and detail of world building
- The influence of mentors on young adults

An Interview with JORDAN H. BARTLETT

1. What inspired *Contest of Queens*?

The idea of a fantasy novel set in a matriarchal society came from a conversation I had with a dear friend of mine over tea. We were discussing how annoying it is that so many fantasy authors create worlds with dragons and elves and whole new cultures and language systems, but somehow decide to keep sexism and racism as a norm. The beauty of a fantasy world is that you can do whatever you want. You can create your own rules. Fantasy novels are a beautiful source of escapism, so why would I want to escape into a world where the societal narrative is the same (often worse) sexist we deal with in our day-to-day?

2. What was the most challenging part about writing a matriarchal world?

The language. Oh nelly, I was not expecting words to fail me, but the English language, I discovered, is patriarchal in nature. So many things I didn't expect needed to be renamed or reworded. Specifically the titles--many of the female titles we have do not carry the same power

behind them. For example, in our world we have Lord and Lady, so to simply switch the power of these two would not convey the same message to the reader given their expectations, plus I wanted to leave it more open for same gender couples. That's where Lord and Genteel came from. Lord is gendered female, and Genteel is the gender-neutral term for a Lord's spouse. Also, balancing the language and the power dynamics in a heterosexual kissing scene was way more complicated than it should be! Who makes the first move? Who is being acted upon? How is it described? What are my world's expectations on how that should look?

3. Do you have a favourite quote? What about that quote attracts you?

One of my favorite quotes is from Brandon Sanderson's Oathbringer: "The most important step a [wo]man can take. It's not the first one, is it? It's the next one. Always the next step." This quote was also said beautifully by Donkey in Shrek, "keep on moving, don't look down," in Disney's Meet the Robinsons, "Keep moving forward," and even by Winston Churchill, "If you're going through hell, keep going," so it's probably a sentiment a lot of us need to hear in a lot of different ways, from a lot of different mouths. So if you, dear reader, need to hear it too, then here it is again from John Silver in Treasure Planet, "You got the makings of greatness in you, but you gotta take the helm and chart your own course! Stick to it, no matter the squalls!"

4. What message/idea do you hope your readers take away from this book?

That in all things, be kind. I hope that this novel shows that prejudice and division of people based on where they're born, or what gender they are only makes us weaker as a whole. I hope that it makes people think about and re-evaluate their own prejudices and how they impact others. I hope my book shows that at the end of the day, people are people. Give one group power and how they shape the world might look different, but there will always be those who are corrupt, and there will always be those fighting for what's right.

5. What aspect of your world are you most proud of?

Honestly, I really enjoyed creating and writing about the guard pairs and knights. They weren't in my first storyboard and arose during worldbuilding that happened while writing the first draft. It was such a fun thought experiment to work out: ok women on average are not as strong as men, how can they still be effective and intimidating law enforcers and a realistic military? and on the flip side, what would the narrative be that would exclude men from joining the ranks? I wanted to keep it as realistic as possible. I drew a lot of inspiration from the show Avatar the Last Airbender, from research around martial art styles like Aikido that focus on outmaneuvering the opponent (rather than being stronger), and the novel Terrier by Tamora Pierce.