

Interview with Jayel Gibson, author of Quondam

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is pleased to be rejoined by Jayel Gibson, who is here to talk about her newest novel, “Quondam.”

Jayel Gibson grew up listening to her grandmother’s stories of Celtic folklore and faerie tales. These stories inspired Jayel to become an author. After teaching elementary school, she retired from education to devote herself to a full-time writing career. The result has been a blending of myth and fantasy and an influence from role-playing games that led her to write her novels. She has joined me previously to discuss her Ancient Mirrors Tales, composed of the novels, “Dragon Queen,” “The Wrekening,” and Damselflies,” but today she will discuss her newest novel in the series, “Quondam.”

Tyler: Welcome to the interview, Jayel. It’s a delight to have you back. I can’t wait to hear about the latest events in your magical worlds. To begin, I have to ask you about the description in your marketing pieces of one of the main characters, who is described as “Bound in mortal flesh by an angry god, a once ethereal nymph murders Quondam’s king and seizes the throne. All who do not bow before her die in the agony that is dragon’s breath.” I absolutely love that description. Will you tell us more about this fascinating character and what happened that made the god angry?

Jayel: Thank you, Tyler. The nymph Karid is bored with her disembodied form. She is curious about flesh bound mortals and the intense feelings they seem to experience. When a dying man stumbles into the realm of the wood nymphs, Karid frees his soul, an act that allows her to ‘feel’ his final moments. Accepting a human soul is the divine right of the gods, and Karid’s boldness offends. As punishment, she is cursed to wear the flesh and make her way among humans. Of course, the reprimand doesn’t work out the way the gods intended.

Tyler: How did you come up with this character? Was she fun to create? I personally have the most fun myself with creating villainous characters.

Jayel: *laughing* Tyler, I have no clue where she came from—one day she just showed up and auditioned in my head. She is very likely the part of me that wonders what it would be like to be disembodied and without emotion. Karid has been very entertaining to write. I do agree; there is something delightful in writing a bit of wickedness.

Tyler: Does “Quondam” have a hero? Is he the character who is derided as condemned dragonspawn?

Jayel: The dragonspawn is a very reluctant hero, tormented and deceived from all sides, torn between destiny and the desire of his heart. He is by far the most magical being I have written, and it will be a long while before I am free of the feelings he evoked.

Tyler: Tell us also about Cwen of Aaradan, niece of the Dragon Queen. What is her role in the story?

Jayel: Cwen has been around a long time. She first appeared as an angry, hateful girl in “The Wrekening” and went on to help the characters in “Damselflies.” I was rather surprised when she accompanied her aunt Yávië into “Quondam.” Cwen is tied to the dragonspawn in ways that will bring her to the very brink of self destruction. She’s a character whose growth is staggering and has surprised even me.

Tyler: Will you tell us how “Quondam” is related to the other books in the Ancient Mirrors Tales? Does it matter which book readers tackle first?

Jayel: From Yávië's summoning as a guardian in "Dragon Queen" to her reunion with her beloved Sorél in "Quondam," we come full circle. Readers who have read the full series say they had some great 'ah-ha' moments in "Quondam." That makes me smile.

For those who enjoy the world building aspect of fantasy, I would recommend reading "Dragon Queen" first; otherwise, I've been told it really doesn't matter. For readers who just want to read a single book of the series, I recommend "Quondam." It's powerful on its own, and the ending will leave them with a feeling of satisfaction.

Tyler: Jayel, with the exception of Cwen, it doesn't seem like the main characters in one book repeat as main characters in other books. Is what holds the books together really the magical world of AEdracmorae? Why do you choose new main characters for each book, which is unusual in a series?

Jayel: The series follows the life quests of two powerful families along the web of paths they walk to reach their final destiny in "Quondam." The tales are bound by the world of AEdracmorae and the magick of the ancient linking mirrors.

Because the story is multi-generational, we see characters' lives change as they grow older and take on different responsibilities. Next generation characters rise to meet the demands of new quests. Piers Anthony's "Xanth" series is another that uses the same environment, but characters wander in and out to meet the needs of the individual tale, often with new characters in the hero role.

Tyler: What about writing these more diverse stories appeals to you, as opposed to having one main character you follow throughout the books? What was the goal you hoped to accomplish, or the desired response from your readers?

Jayel: I enjoy getting to know new characters, just as I enjoy meeting new real life folks. Perhaps it is also an awareness that I have occasionally become disenchanted by a long running series where the same hero returned again and again. R.A. Salvatore's Drizzt Do'Urden is an example. In the first few books I found him highly amusing, later on, I came to love him less and less.

I would like my readers to come away with a love of AEdracmorae and the Ancient Mirrors characters as well as a desire to roam Ever'neath and meet new characters from Celt inspired realms. The teacher in me makes sure that there are lessons to be learned about responsibility for our actions and the rule of natural consequences.

Tyler: Jayel, is "Quondam" then the last we will read of the Ancient Mirrors Tales?

Jayel: "Quondam" completes the Ancient Mirrors Tales, at least for the moment. My editor swears there will be a 'lost chapters' story somewhere down the line. Guess we'll have to wait and see if she's right.

Tyler: How does it feel knowing the series is complete and you have accomplished your goal?

Jayel: It's been a divided torment. On one hand, I've been hanging around with the Ancient Mirrors characters for over five years. They're old friends, comfortable and well known. On the flipside, I've had the characters of six upcoming Ever'neath novels screaming to be written, and I am enjoying the new world experiences as I develop a kinship with the Ever'neath characters.

Tyler: Jayel, do you plan to write any more books right now?

Jayel: I am currently at work on the second manuscript of a new series called Ever'neath. The new stories take place in the sky cities of the Empyrean Sidhe (pronounced 'shee') and the world below called Ever'neath. The common thread throughout the series is the search for the Haelo-Qua (HALO kwa)—a being capable of voicing the images in the legendary Book of Silence.

The story is great fun to write. I hope it will be as much fun to read.

Tyler: I am surprised by how quickly each book in the Ancient Mirrors Tales has come out. Did you have all the books written before you published them, or do you write each one once the next comes out? Will you tell us a little bit about your writing process?

Jayel: I did have the series completed before it went to Synergy Books. The first two books of the series, "Dragon Queen" and "The Wrekening" were re-release editions. "Damselflies" and "Quondam" are new releases with this publisher. Having the series completed allowed the books to be released in six month intervals, instead of the usual

one year publication rate. Unfortunately, the same will not be true of Ever'neath. It's scheduled for a book a year release, beginning fall 2009.

Ahhh, the writing process—this is where I begin to look slightly demented. *grin* Thanks for asking, Tyler.

I never begin a story unless I see the end. For me, the story encompasses the entire series of books. I see it as a single tale, only the need for practicality breaks it into the more manageable chunks that become individual books. The writing process is a sensory one for me. I see the story in Cinemascope and Technicolor in my mind, complete with special effects and full surround sound. I've often remarked that I am nothing but a typist for those who live the tale. I see the setting, experience the shock of the arrow or the ax, smell the water and the willows, taste the bannock or gall oil, hear the ring of swords and the timbre of a voice, and I simply write it down.

Basically, I just work here and it is abundantly clear that I am not the boss.

Tyler: Jayel, we've talked previously about your influences from Celtic myth and other sources, but I am interested in your saying you're not the boss when you write. What would you say motivates or influences you to write—characters, or a desire to teach, or just to entertain readers?

Jayel: I actually write for very selfish reasons. I'm a storyteller, always have been. It would be impossible for me not to write a story when it gets inside my head, even if no one ever read my work. It's as much a part of me as breathing.

I am delighted when readers enjoy a story. It is one of the most remarkable feelings when you touch another with your words.

Tyler: What responses have you received from readers? Despite how quickly the books have come out, do they complain about having to wait for the next one?

Jayel: I don't think it would matter if books were published monthly. As readers, we are impatient. If we enjoy a writer's work, we can't get our hands on the next installment fast enough. I complain constantly that my favorite writers, film producers and video game developers don't get new products out on the shelves with the same urgency that the fans desire.

I've been receiving the 'when will the first book of Ever'neath be out' emails; my publicist has even gotten Ever'neath requests from reviewers. So, I'm taking that as a good sign.

Tyler: Jayel, do you think you will always write fantasy novels? Have you tried to write other genres? Why is fantasy what you've chosen to focus on, as opposed to mysteries, or historical fiction, or romance?

Jayel: I've never given it much thought. The stories crowding my mind are fantasy. I love meeting new beings and exploring the new worlds found in fantasy, my own and others. I think writing chooses us, rather than the other way around, and at the moment it seems that fantasy has chosen me. But, I've learned never to assume anything, so maybe there'll be a change somewhere down the road.

Tyler: Jayel, before we go, will you remind readers about your website and what information they can find there if they want to know more about the Ancient Mirrors Tales?

Jayel: Come see me at ancientmirrors.com or jayelgibson.com. You'll find the usual book and author info, book trailers and some sneak peeks of the new Ever'neath character portraits on the gallery carousel. We have bimonthly book and art print giveaways, and visitors can receive a free laminated bookmark just for dropping by the sites and posting me an email. Our current e-Signed offering is "Quondam."

Tyler: Thank you, Jayel. It's been a pleasure as always. I hope you hurry up and get those "Ever'neath" novels written so we can talk again.

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