

## Tales by Moons-light: Stories from before the Great Melt

### Questions for Media

1. Your first book *Frankie and the Gift of Fantasy* is a full-length novel for middle graders. What inspired you to try the short story form with *Tales by Moons-light: Stories from before the Great Melt*?

In *Frankie and the Gift of Fantasy*, Frankie travels to a distant two-mooned planet called Urth for a mind-blowing adventure. While he's there, he meets a young girl named Iktae, and teaches her to read.

Urth has its own cultures and traditions, and its own version of fairy tales to entertain and transmit values to children. The most beloved of these is *Tales by Moons-light: Stories from before the Great Melt*, and it's one of the books that Frankie reads to Iktae. After I'd finished *Frankie and the Gift of Fantasy*, it was a natural progression to write this book of fairy tales, too. By the time I'd finished writing Frankie's story, I'd already hatched out some of the tale and written the first drafts.

2. The stories take place on a two-mooned planet called Urth. How did you come up with such an innovative idea?

From the time I was very little, as early as 4-5 years old, I've been fascinated by astronomy, and the possibility of life elsewhere in the Universe. I've been particularly captivated by Earth's moon: how it travels through the heavens as the months pass, and how it generates our ocean tides. I thought it would be fun to build a mythical world that had two moons... double the phases, triple the tides, and quadruple the fun! As it turns out, playing with the delightful complexity of a two-moon planetary system was even more interesting and entertaining than I'd first thought.

3. Is there a theme or themes that tie the tales together?

All the stories are rich in science, yet magical, and each story carries a timeless lesson, with diverse young protagonists who struggle against daunting challenges and emerge victorious.

Unlike other books of fairy tales, though, *Tales by Moons-light* mixes fantasy with real science, giving its readers practice untwisting the two, a critically important skill these days.

4. Do you think any of the stories could be expanded into a full-length book?

No, not really. Each story is, by its nature, short and pithy, with a timeless message. The stories are best told in a short format. I don't think they'd be enhanced by being any longer than they already are.

5. How might the stories help your readers think about the world differently?

Collectively, they're designed to raise scientific literacy in kids, even those who are science-shy. Sub-themes include understanding the amazing Universe and our place in it, the strength in diversity, the power of rational, scientific thinking (as opposed to sloppy, magic thinking), and our absolute reliance on the web of life that surrounds and supports us.

6. What are some of your favorite writers of the fairy tale genre?

My favorite authors (and the ones that influenced me the most) are Hans Christian Andersen (e.g. *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Emperor's New Clothes*), Joseph Jacobs (*The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*), and Dr. Seuss (*The Sneetches*, *Horton Hears a Who*, *The Lorax*). The tales by these authors are short and pithy, but pack big, and obvious, messages (morals). I love that.

7. Can you give us a sneak peek about the next book in the series?

The next book, *Elvia and the Gift of Passion*, is another novel in the *Tales by Moons-light* book series, continuing the tradition of *Frankie and the Gift of Fantasy*. Like Frankie, Elvia travels to Urth on a journey of self-discovery, but her gift is Passion, not fantasy, and her adventure is therefore different.

Elvia Hill is feisty by nature, with tons of energy and good will, but she tends to rub people the wrong way. Thus, her parents are reluctant to take her on their safari to Tanzania, Africa. They're practical people, and judge Elvia harshly for her tumultuous emotions. They'd planned the vacation as a romantic getaway, for just the two of them, and didn't want Elvia in the mix. But when Elvia's babysitter falls ill, they realize have no choice, so they take her along anyway, hoping for the best.

To their horror, their worst fears come true. Elvia disappears from Tembo National Park, apparently the victim of a lion snatching! A massive search ensues, involving a corrupt park director, a delusional lion expert, a DNA specialist, a witchdoctor, and a local couple who run an organization called *Parents of Swallowed Children*, who are keen to help.

Elvia's parents are desperate to find her, but there's no chance of that. Elvia isn't in the belly of a lion after all. She's on Urth, sailing on a cruising submarine to a mysterious island called Amdar. Along the way, she meets a twelve-year-old boy with the unlikely name of Rats, who is also from Earth and shares an exciting secret.

So as not to ruin the plot, I won't say more than that, but suffice it to say that Elvia is changed forever by her amazing trip across the galaxy, and her parents back on Earth are changed, too, and for the better.