

TRACY M. JOYCE

# ALTAICA



BOOK ONE IN THE CHRONICLES OF ALTAICA

## About the book

*'Despite the fantasy setting, Altaica's themes have some important real-world parallels... This is a welcome change from the pervasive cookie cutter approach to writing.' Gill, Goodreads.*

*Altaica* is an epic fantasy aimed at the Young Adult through to Adult markets. *Altaica* is not a formulaic fantasy, and for this reason it is gaining a steady following amongst readers who are not dedicated fans of the genre as well as those who are.

*Altaica* deals with themes of racism, superstition, identity, belonging and personal redemption.

Isaura, the main character of *Altaica*, is an independent young woman, born to refugees within a community that fears her kind. She chooses to flee her homeland before an invading army sets her on a path that irrevocably alters her life. Often uncertain, with a lot to learn about herself and others, she is forced to make some horrendous moral choices.

Isaura has immense strength of character. She is the opposite of everything regarded as acceptable, yet she survives and makes a place for herself. Despite what life throws at her, she emerges stronger for it.

Due to the darker nature of some of the moral issues confronting Isaura, this book is recommended for readers approx. 15 years and up.

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### ~ Description ~

'Look at her—she's Hill Clan. Even the Matyrani don't like them ...'

Isaura—little is known about her race, but much is whispered. Born to refugees, she grows up enduring racism and superstition within a community that fears her. She has few friends, and those she treasures. Trapped, she longs for escape to a different life.

Escape is only the beginning of her troubles. Having fled an invading army with her friends, Isaura is faced with heinous choices in order to survive. Secrets from her past emerge to torment her and threaten to destroy all she holds dear. Her struggles forge a bond with an ancient power—a power which may transform or consume her. Old hatreds and superstitions are renewed and at her most vulnerable she learns the true nature of those around her.

Her only hope lies in a foreign land—a land rich in tradition, ruled by three powerful clans. A land with a history marked by warfare, where magic as we know it does not exist. Instead what is here, in abundance, is a more primal power.

Survival carries a high price. Welcome to Altaica.

SURVIVAL  
CARRIES A  
HIGH PRICE

WELCOME TO  
ALTAICA



TRACY M. JOYCE

# Praise for Altaica

'Dang it's good. Once in a while you run into books like Cindi Williams Chima's Gray wolves clan novels or Scarlett Dawn's King's hall series and you just know you've hit the jackpot. This is one of those times. This is a series that will keep you wanting more.'

– Jeliat Adesiyan, Books of My Dreams

'This book was completely and utterly amazing! So unlike anything I've ever read with such gorgeous characters. Fantastic and vibrant settings as well. Adored it.'

– Nicola, NetGalley

'It became hard to put the book down ... If you really enjoy fantasy reads, you will enjoy this one. I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves to escape from reality.'

– Sam's Reading Addiction \*\*\*\*\*

'This story is wonderful and unique, greatly written, and it's just, wow. I couldn't put it down ... I can't wait until next year to get my hands on the second book.'

– Lenissa, Goodreads \*\*\*\*\*

'The book so was exciting I was biting my nails through some hairy parts ... it was so refreshing to find a book that not only took your interest from the beginning, but also had a way of playing with your emotions and making you feel like your heart was on a roller coaster ride.' – Best Books Blog \*\*\*\*\*

'Tightly plotted first book of what promises to be an interesting series.'

– Martha, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

'This is a great book for the first instalment of The Chronicles of Altaica! There is adventure, war, and love ... This is an epic I would love to continue reading!'

– Katie, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

'For anyone longing for adventure, this is the book to read! There is action, romance, humour and a strong willed protagonist you can't help but admire and root for... nothing is left out; making one's imagination soar!'

– Hannah, Goodreads \*\*\*\*\*

'Altaica is one hell of a fantasy adventure. The author, Tracy M. Joyce does a beautiful job of blending world building with colorful expression. The result of such a melody is fantastic prose and a fluency to her work.'

– Allison, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

'This novel is not your typical fantasy novel, either, but introduces a lush, extremely interesting new world in a unique way.'

– Amy, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

'I love the development of the characters' personality ... The characters are well written & each one makes you want to know more about them ... I didn't "feel" like I was reading ... I got drawn into the world of Altaica and look forward to book 2.'

– Jay, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

This novel was everything I did not know I was looking for and more. As a huge fan of Tamora Pierce, I quickly fell in love with your world and heroine. It has been a long time since I have been so enraptured with a novel in such a short time.

– Allie C, NetGalley \*\*\*\*\*

'This is a welcome change from the pervasive cookie cutter approach to writing ... Altaica's themes have some important real world parallels. We learn about the plight of those displaced by war and seeking refuge in another land. We learn that the line between right and wrong, or between good and bad, is very much blurred.'

– Gill, Goodreads \*\*\*\*

# Press

Interview in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2 September 2014, by Tasman Anderson



Author Tracy M. Joyce has launched her debut novel, *Altaica*.

## Morals run deep

TASMAN ANDERSON  
TXT4U REPORTER

JUST when you thought the fantasy world was just a load of magic, Tracy M. Joyce proves us all wrong with her debut novel *Altaica*.

Focusing on the adventures of a refugee, Isaura, *Altaica* is different in that the story is told by those surrounding the main character.

The debut novel explores issues such as racism, superstition, identity and belonging in a way that children can understand.

"Everyone in *Altaica* has an ulterior motive behind their actions," she said.

"These issues confront us in real life and I wanted this world to seem as if it could be real."

Ms Joyce, who teaches English part-time, believes her readers would identify most with Isaura.

"I admire her courage in the face of adversity," she said.

"She is the opposite of everything they regard as acceptable in terms of appearance and behaviour, yet she has survived and made a place for herself in this world."

Although *Altaica* moves at a fast pace, with plenty of action, magic and guardian animals, Ms Joyce said she wanted the novel to convey an important message to her younger audience.

"We can't escape our past and all our actions have consequences, sometimes far beyond what we can foresee," she said.

"I tried to present the moral issues in such a way that the emphasis was on the effects these choices had on the characters, rather than on whether I thought they were right or not."

Ms Joyce plans to turn *Altaica* into a five-part series, known as the *Chronicles of Altaica*. The sequel, *Asena Blessed*, is set to continue Isaura's tale from where *Altaica* left off.

"If anything, this new book has a faster pace, more character upsets and a few extra surprises," she said.

The series' other three novels will include two that take place 20 years after the first one, as well as a stand-alone book in between, which will fill the readers in on some important details about the land Isaura came from. Visit [www.tracymjoyce.com](http://www.tracymjoyce.com)

### 'Behind the Words' TV interview with Tracy M Joyce, Continuum 2014

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTx\\_DsgbVx0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTx_DsgbVx0)

Broadcast on Channel 31, 22 September 2014

### Summer of Success Series – Interview with Tracy Joyce

<http://www.everynkildare.com/summer-of-success-series-interview-with-tracy-joyce/>

'... the characters are the foundation of what makes it unique ... strong female characters ... who don't conform & who make a place for themselves within their world. There are complex relationships within the novel, conflicting emotions & motives and characters, who you love, may act in a way that you don't agree with. I like the notion of "moral greyness"—that "good" people can do "bad" things and vice versa.' – Everyn Kildare's blog

### Into Another World – Today's Featured Author: Tracy M. Joyce

<http://susanleighnoble.wordpress.com/2014/07/25/todays-featured-author-tracy-m-joyce/>

'I can't shut my imagination down and ideas and visuals of stories just keep recurring to me. I have to write them down. I also love creating worlds and putting a lot of what I observe in the real world into my fictional characters. Despite the fact that it's fantasy, real life provides much of the inspiration behind my writing.'

– Susan Leigh Noble's blog

### Guest post ~ writing Altaica, Book 1 in Chronicles of Altaica, by Tracy M. Joyce

<http://tonyriches.blogspot.co.uk/2014/08/guest-post-writing-altaica-book-1-in.html>

'The world of *Altaica* combines my love of horses, history and archery into a world of my own creation. I have "cherry picked" much from various histories, folk lore and myth in my world creation.' – Tony Riches' blog

### Book Enticed – Author Highlight: Tracy M. Joyce

<http://bookenticed.tumblr.com>

'... readers seem to see the world building of *Altaica* as unique ... It seems that this combination resonates with many people from different cultures and on many different levels.'

'There are plans for four more books in *The Chronicles of Altaica*. The next book completes a duology dealing with Altaica's current main protagonist—Isaura. A following duology is planned, which takes place approx. 20 years after the first one. However there will be a standalone book in between.'

# Excerpt from Altaica

## ~ Chapter One ~

ISAURA HAD TAKEN a chance coming here. She desperately hoped that she had not made the wrong choice by giving in to her curiosity. Time was precious and although she started out early, she had yet to make it home. She kept up a brisk pace and negotiated the steep, increasingly rocky, goat path up Mt Majula. Isaura wove between tall pines, her lithe frame moving quietly and fluidly from their shadows into the patches of early morning sunlight that dotted the path. She paused when the track wended its way down an overgrown ridge. Drawing a deep breath, Isaura left the path and began scrambling nimbly up the ridge among the large rocks. The trees grew steadily more sparse and spindly as she climbed. The air was bracing, reddening even her tanned cheeks; her breath became laboured as the way grew more arduous.

Her pace had slowed, yet, driven by dread, she surged up the last section of her climb. At the base of an enormous flat boulder, she bent over with her hands on her knees to catch her breath. Straightening, she looked with determination at the lip of the rock just above her. Isaura jumped, latching onto the rock edge with her fingers. She scrabbled for purchase with her boots, levered herself up and dragged her body onto its flat top. She loved this spot; it was her refuge, but after today she would no longer have it. She knew there was no time to think like that; besides there was so much about life here she wouldn't miss.

Walking to the other side of the rock, she surveyed the wide plains below her. *They're already here!* Stretched out along the plains, a vast column of Zaragarian troops marched toward her with row upon row of cavalry, foot soldiers, siege weapons and wagons. Devastation lay in their wake. From her perch, Isaura could see the huge pillar of grimy, sooty clouds that billowed above the burning market town of Santente. Smaller spires of smoke and blackened land pockmarked the rest of the plain, as if some malignancy had infected it.

Isaura was mesmerised by the orderly march of this enormous army and fancied she could hear the rhythmic pounding of boots as they flattened the land beneath them. Her eyes were drawn to the smoke and the pall that hung over the horizon. The contrast between the chaos they had inflicted and the regimented order and discipline of the army sickened, fascinated and terrified her—this was an immense, relentless, ruthless machine.

Zaragaria, a desert country with few fertile tracts of land, lay in the west. For generations the warlike tribes there had feuded amongst themselves, posing no threat to the rest of

the land. They were looked upon as a rabble of inferior savages. However, Aitor I, the great grandfather of the current Zaragarian Emperor, had united them with promises of riches and freedom from the harsh life of their desert home. No longer a rabble, they conquered their neighbours. Word of their brutality spread. Their need for land

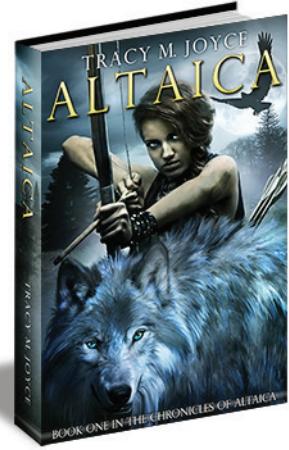
was satisfied but Aitor's need for power was not. Steadily they increased their influence, conquering more countries through war, politically astute marriages or murder. Arunabejar stood in their way and, while lacking in mineral resources, it was fertile farming land—perfect for supplying an army. It was a food bowl and a gateway to those few remaining lands the Zaragaria had not yet conquered. With a relatively small army, it never stood a chance.

Isaura had never prayed. There were too many religions and so many gods now, each claiming theirs was the true way, that she thought them all ridiculous. To whom would she pray, even if any of them were real? Now, however, as a wave of dread and nausea settled in her stomach, she thought perhaps if ever there was a time for a prayer, then this was it.

'Majula, you and Araceli are the oldest gods; the father and mother of all. My friends keep to the old religion, they pray to you. Keep them safe.' She stared at the host arrayed in the distance below her. 'Please keep them safe. Give me the skills to help them.' A zephyr curled around her, brushing her face gently, then was gone.

Anxious to leave, she spun around to lower herself from the boulder. As she did she was distracted by a distant glint. The river snaked through Laguta, on their border, through the plains and forests of Arunabejar to the sea. She stared hard, squinting, wishing to see it again to be sure. 'No. Surely not? Damn it! They're on the river too.' Dismayed, her thoughts raced to the old river barge she was to sail to rendezvous with her friends in order to escape. Panicking, Isaura leapt from her lookout and scrambled down the slope at a frantic pace. Her feet slipped and she skidded on her backside onto the narrow goat trail, dislodging stones and sending them careening down the hillside. She leapt up and pounded along the trail, her earlier fatigue vanishing in the face of her fear.

As she descended, the trees allowed only speckled patches of early morning light to penetrate the canopy. Isaura paused, breathing deeply, one hand braced against a



tree trunk, her lungs and throat afire. Something whizzed past her face. She spun around just as an arrow lodged in the tree next to her. *Oh shit! Scouts. Please, get me out of this. Think, girl.* Isaura surged forward, reserves of energy she was unaware she possessed renewing her flight.

As she fled, a voice called out. ‘C’mon, I told you someone was up there. Those rocks didn’t tumble down for no reason. Get her!’

Her blind panic subsided as she ran; Isaura was assessing, planning. She knew at least two were behind her. A branch snapped somewhere to her left. *There’s another! Come on, Isa. You know this place, they don’t—think!* Not following any obvious path, she ducked, weaved, and leapt through the vegetation hoping to lose them. Isaura heard them cursing as they tripped over fallen branches, which she had jumped, in the dim light. A smile crept across her face, but vanished quickly as she realised that those behind still dogged her. There were no further noises to her left, yet her instincts told her the scout was still there.

Veering to the right, she connected with a clear, well-travelled animal path. She heard the two behind her stumble onto the clearer path.

‘We have her now!’ More footfalls joined theirs in the pursuit. The narrow trail continued downhill amongst a multitude of tall tree ferns, whose fronds arched over the path, reducing the light even further. It angled around a steep slope littered with generations of fallen debris, forcing her pursuers to keep to the trail.

Finding another burst of speed, she put as much distance between herself and the enemy as she could, before she rounded a bend and the path widened. Isaura peered at the left side of the path. A mammoth tree trunk lay half buried on the outer limit of the path. Over the years more ferns had grown on and around it. gingerly, struggling to stop her hands shaking, she parted the fronds of a large fern, revealing a dark hole between the trunk and the track, whose entrance was narrower than she remembered.

*Shit! Please fit, please fit, please ...*

Heart pounding, Isaura carefully lowered herself into the hole, trying not to break any fronds as she passed. She cursed as she felt more dirt crumble away around her. She wedged herself under the tree trunk, concealed by the overhang it created. Precariously balanced and clinging tenaciously to a tree root, she struggled to maintain firm footing. Peering down, Isaura was grateful that the dirt she had dislodged had not cascaded far down the slope. Would they see it? The wait for her pursuers seemed interminable. *Where are they?* The forest was quiet—waiting. The temptation to look gnawed at her. Isaura heard the soft scuff of a boot—close. They were right above her. Barely breathing, she fervently hoped the now wider hole remained concealed. She began to sweat and her hands felt slippery on the tree root. Teeth gritted, she prayed, *Please. Gods, please ...* A terrified squeal nearly slipped from her as guttural voices sounded overhead.

‘We’ve lost her.’

‘We can’t have ...’

‘She was running like a rabbit, she’s probably ahead of us somewhere.’

‘This is a waste of time. It’s just a girl ...’

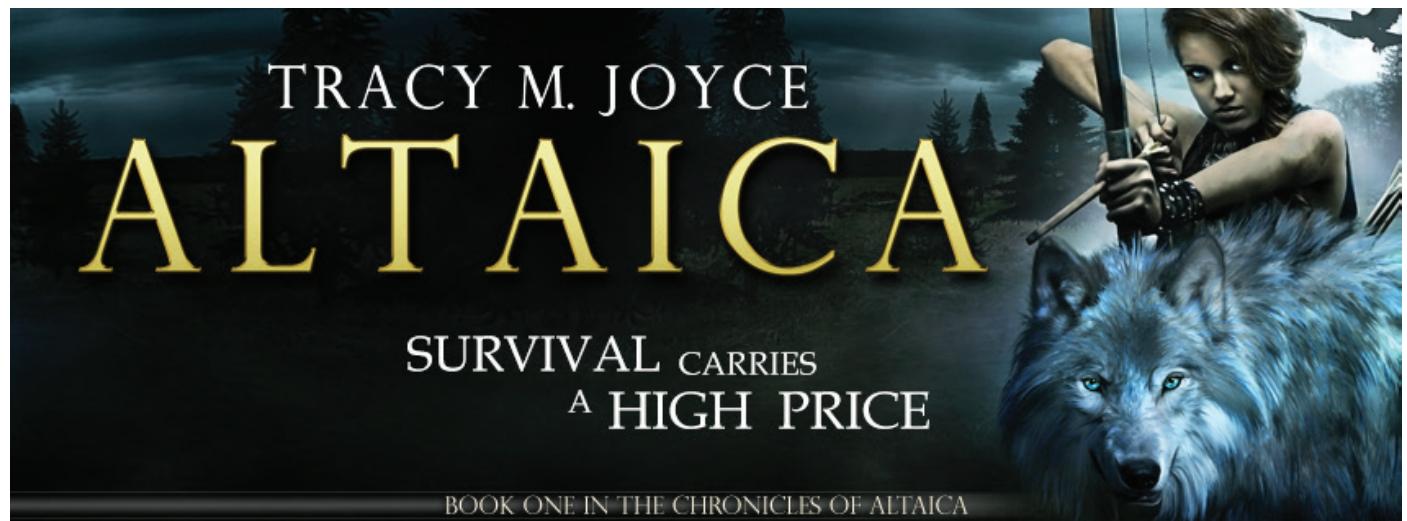
‘She could be a scout.’

‘Did she look like a bloody scout?’

‘What was she doing out here then?’

There was a pause, as if they were waiting for instructions. The silence stretched. Isaura waited. Finally, a harsh voice said, ‘Enough. We’ve orders. We’ll head back to the others. Follow this path for a bit. If my instincts are right we’re not far from the forest road anyway. If you see her, then you can have your fun.’

She did not hear them leave. Isaura’s heart was pounding. Her instincts screamed, *Don’t move. It’s a trick.* She waited until the forest noises began to return; only then did she leave her cover and head for home, praying she was not too late.



# About the author

Tracy M Joyce is an Australian author of speculative fiction. Her debut novel, *Altaica: Book I in The Chronicles of Altaica*, is published by Odyssey Books.

Tracy has long been a fan of the fantasy genre, but particularly likes novels that deal with deep characterisations and that don't flinch from the gritty realities of life. This and her fascination with the notions of 'moral greyness', that 'good people can do bad things' and that we cannot escape our past provide the inspiration for her writing. Combine that with her love of history, horses and archery and you have *Altaica*.

She grew up on a farm in rural Victoria, in a picturesque dot on the map known as Glenburn. She spent half of her childhood riding horses and the other half trying to stay out of trouble—the only way she did that was by reading books and writing stories. She now lives in Melbourne with her husband, two cats and two (very) lazy greyhounds.

Tracy holds a BA (Hons) from Monash University, spent many years in a variety of administrative roles and fortunately never gave up on her childhood dream to become a writer. In her spare time she tutors a select and unlucky group of students in English.

More information on Tracy and her writing can be found at:

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