



IMAGINING A NEW WORLD

Farah Oomerbhoy's debut novel is the first in the series of *The Avalonia Chronicles* set in the utopian, magical land of Avalonia

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Books with an element of fantasy and magic always fascinated young debut author Farah Oomerbhoy. "My love for fantasy literature stemmed from one of the first books I read — Enid Blyton's *Magic Faraway Tree* series. Since then I was hooked and proceeded to devour anything fantastical that came my way. From the magical worlds of C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, to T.H. White's *A Once and Future King* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*," says Farah.

THE LAST OF THE FIREDRAKES

by Farah Oomerbhoy
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These books inspired her to write a story that would combine the best of all that she learned from these wonderful stories, and so her debut novel *The Last of the Firedrakes* — *The Avalonia Chronicles* started to take shape. She elaborates, "I have always loved the idea of being able to enter another magical world from our own. Worlds like Narnia, Hogwarts, Wonderland and Neverland have always been at the heart of my inspiration for creating Avalonia. One of the main concepts of the story is that Aurora could be anyone; that at any point of time it could be you

who could open a cupboard, enter a library or step into a tapestry and be transported to a magical world."

Sharing about how the idea turned into a full-fledged book, she says, "It was all a hobby at first. I didn't really think I'd ever publish this book when I started imagining the world of Avalonia. It all started with a rough map that I scribbled on a piece of paper. I named my new world 'Avalonia', partly inspired by the Arthurian legends of the mystical isle of Avalon. From then on Avalonia was a real place. Initially, I just created the world. I enjoyed drawing maps, imagining and writing down the history and culture of each kingdom, creating different societies and cultures, and it just kept growing."

Avalonia is as much a character in the book as protagonist Aurora. How did Farah manage to flesh out the details of this make-believe world? She concludes, "When I wrote Aurora, I wanted my main character to be one whom teenage girls could relate to. I wanted her to be strong willed, capable and someone whom they could look up to as well. Aurora is 16 years old, she's an ordinary girl living an ordinary life. But when she is thrust into a magical world unprepared, that's when her character starts her journey of discovery. It is not only a journey of learning about the world of Avalonia and its many societies, cultures, and magic. It is also an inner journey for Aurora, a journey of life."