



## Map of Shadows

*J.F. Penn*

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A map of skin etched in blood.

A world under threat from the Borderlands.

A young woman who must risk the shadows to save her family.

When her Grandfather is murdered under mysterious circumstances, Sienna Farren inherits his map shop in the ancient city of Bath, England. Once there, she discovers that her family is bound up with the Ministry of Maps, a mysterious agency who maintain the borders between this world and the Uncharted.

With the help of Mila Wendell, a traveller on the canals, Sienna discovers her own magical ability and a terrifying place of blood that awaits in the world beyond.

But when she discovers a truth about her past and the Borderlands begin to push through the defenses, Sienna must join the team of Mapwalkers on their mission to find the Map of Shadows – whatever the cost.

In a place written out of history, a world off the edge of the map, Sienna must risk everything to find her father ... and her true path as a Mapwalker.

This dark fantasy novel is the first in the new Mapwalker series.

## Map of Shadows Details

Date : Published December 12th 2017 by Curl Up Press

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Author : J.F. Penn

Format : Kindle Edition

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## From Reader Review Map of Shadows for online ebook

### Pete says

I have been a fan of J.F. Penn for quite a while now and I really enjoy everything that she produces, so I was very excited to hear that she was writing a new series about maps, but I have to admit that she took me completely by surprise with this first book, and how she manages to expand that simple subject into a magical (literally) story about the borders between the earth as we know it and the dark mysterious Borderlands, which are always trying to break through those borders and drag the world we know into theirs. Her imagination doesn't seem to know any bounds!

The characters are all brilliantly written and become very believable (as far as supernatural characters can) and I found myself really caring about and rooting for the central character, Sienna.

The subject matter for this book is quite dark, but it isn't gory, even though it does involve maps drawn in blood on human skin.

J.F. Penn can be relied on to provide really evocative descriptions of the locations her books are set in, and this is no exception, she evokes the geography of Bath brilliantly, so I felt that I really knew the city, even though I have only visited there once, many years ago and she makes the Borderlands seem very real as well. The pace of the plot is terrific, and it became quite a quick read for me as I found it very difficult to put down. Whilst this is a self-contained complete story, it very neatly leaves the door (or should that be portal?) open for more books featuring Sienna and the Mapwalkers to battle against the Borderlanders, I can't wait. I did receive a complimentary copy of the book from the author, but this review has been voluntarily written and is purely based on my own opinions.

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### Melleny says

#### 3.25 Stars

*If you would like to see all my thoughts on this book, be sure to check out the review on my blog:*

[www.abooktropolis01.blogspot.co.za](http://www.abooktropolis01.blogspot.co.za)

*But here is a snippet and overview of what I thought:*

Overall, I think that this story has potential. The author's writing is definitely in the beginning stages but I think that with time they will figure some things out. The wiring will become a whole lot better with both time and practice. The plot was interesting but I felt myself skipping over some sections because they were boring or because it was too much of an information dump. Please be aware that this book does contain self-harm. The characters were also felt but with the development of the author's writing, the characters will also get more depth. Thank you so much to *Kate Tilton's Author Services* for providing me with a copy of this book!

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## **Toni Osborne says**

Book # 1 in the Mapwalkers series

This new series is a dark fantasy and a pretty weird story, not to mention gory to no end. A map of skin etched in blood and a world under threat.....

Those of us fans of this author already knows how creative she is and how richly and cleverly written her stories are. Well no exception here. Vividly said Bath comes to life with creepy characters and supernatural happenings. This intriguing story based on maps and cartographers propels us into a fantasy world where a mysterious agency maintains the borders between this word and the Uncharted. Spooky, indeed

On the surface Bath is a genteel place but Ms. Penn imagination show us that there is a darker side to the city. Beneath the charming streets lies a weird city, a place haunted by mysterious power. Here, local legends play a good part. Sienna Farren is the main character and is aided by colourful secondary players that have magical abilities and terrifying shadows to scare us to death...

Although this book as many good qualities I honestly can't say it drew me in, too weird for my taste but I must say parts reflect our real world where countries are ravaged by war, famine, poverty, terrorism and many other afflictions leaving their people to suffer the consequences...totally abandoned.

I received this ARC from the author for my thoughts. It may not have been my preferred book but it is definitely not one to pass over.....give it a go.

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## **Sharon Rouquette says**

I loved this book! The author sent me an advance copy to read and review because I'm a fan of her work, and I received it this morning and couldn't stop reading until the end.

The central idea seems to me to be a clever one-- that people called Cartographers with magic in their bloodlines can travel through maps, or bring the fanciful animals decorating old maps to life, or several other interesting magical skills. They work together to defend our Earth against invasion from the inhabitants of a shadow earth. Everything gets very exciting, England and our world are on the line, and a small band has to save the world.

Very J.F. Penn, wouldn't you say? Yes!

Try it, you'll like it!

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## **Denise says**

I really liked the world building of this book. I can't wait to read more of this series and see what happens in the Borderlands with the Mapwalkers of both worlds.

Sienna has been left a map shop in her grandfather's will. She had not really known the man, but a visit to the city of Bath was just what she needed. She finds herself drawn into a society of Mapwalkers whose job is to protect this reality from the creatures of the Borderland. The story is just beginning and there are many more

adventures to be had as the group struggles to keep the borders closed and help the mistreated on the the other side. There is even the glimmer of a romance in the making.

I was given an ARC of this book. My review is voluntary.

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### **Holly says**

It's a joy to see how far Penn has come since her first book. I've had the pleasure of following her journey to this point, and this wonderful book.

Map of Shadows has exquisite worldbuilding and interesting characters that race through a quick-paced and engaging plot. It was a thrilling ride and I can't wait to read the next book.

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### **Michele Perry says**

Loved being immersed into this fabulous story and the wonderfully imaginative world Penn created. This book has all of my favourite aspects of good story-telling - dimensional life-like characters, descriptive scene-setting, historical aspects interspersed throughout, well-paced and imaginative plot threads. If you are after an adventurous, magical, thrilling and thoroughly enjoyable read, this one is perfect for you! Can't wait of the next book in the series.

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### **Eduan Slabbert says**

What an extremely enjoyable and exhilarating story!

I received an advance reader copy from the author, yet this review is entirely based on my own feelings and experience.

The premise of this book already had me intrigued, and I'm glad to report it does not disappoint. Although I would have liked to spend more time in this world, I am sure the sequels will be coming soon enough.

Fast-paced and high-stakes, this is yet another superb work from the pen and mind of J.F. Penn.

Yet again I am reminded why I keep coming back.

Bravo!

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### **Michaelbrent Collings says**

Here is the litmus test for a great story: when you are in bed at night, reading, and your spouse elbows you in the side and says, "Shut UP."

"What?" you answer, confused about what's happening, half of you still trapped in the story you've fallen into.

"You were SHOUTING," she says. Then she rolls over, laughing because she knows what this means: that SHE has found a new story, too, because when I'm done with it, it's her turn.

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The above is rare for me. As a writer myself, I have a marked tendency to pick a story apart, to dissect each sentence after reading it and to ruthlessly VIVISECT the plot AS I read it. I'm like a mad scientist, who in churning out his own little monsters has ceased to view the other creatures out there as anything other than items of academic interest. Just things to be learned from or things to be despised, depending on how competent those creatures' own "mad scientist" parent are (or are not).

And then, in a beautiful - and all-too-rare - moment, one of those creatures not only meets your gaze, but stares you down and then SPEAKS to you. You are reminded that these creatures, these little monsters that have sprung forth of others' minds, can sometimes rise to be more than things to be examined. They can be extraordinary, full of wonder and light and genuine magic.

Map of Shadows, the first book of the Mapwalkers series, is a story like this. I went into it with the concern that I ALWAYS have when reading a story by someone I know and respect, because there is nothing worse than telling a friend that their latest is anything other than magnificent. Ms. Penn and I are not the kind of buddies who hang out - or even talk regularly - but she has interviewed me a number of times for her (superlative) writing podcast, The Creative Penn. I count those interviews as among the most fun I have had, and Ms. Penn as one of the best hosts, who brings you not only onto her show, but into her heart.

Now, I'm not just wandering around aimlessly here. I mention The Creative Penn because in the same way that she opens her heart and mind and her great understanding of the written word to those lucky people in her audience (and those luckier people whom she hosts on her show) so she has opened that heart and mind and understanding to those lucky people who read this book. Map of Shadows, like The Creative Penn and the best books and like Ms. Penn herself, is simply MAGIC.

Shadow Cartographers. Maps of Shadow. Labyrinths where death makes its home. Places that have not truly disappeared from the world, but which most certainly HAVE become lost... and become darker in the losing. Fiendish monsters torn from dark imaginings and even greater monsters embodied in the men and women who bear sad resemblance to our own darkest selves.

All this and more is on full display in Map of Shadows, but above all that, this book is about connections.

It is a story of a woman who finds that this world we enjoy is not the ONLY world, and perhaps not even the most important or more powerful. But as her understanding of the world(s) grows(s), so too does her ability to bring real betterment to that world.

It is the story of a woman who chooses to reject a life of relative comfort for a life of danger, and does so for nothing more nor less than the tiny chance that she will find a family she thought lost to her.

It is the story of a woman who has few connections to a world which - as it has for so many of us - has grown cold and distant and even alien; but who then finds those connections in the form of new friends who are willing to echo her sacrifices and then add some of their own. It is the story of hopelessness found in dark places, but then brought back to the light.

It is the story of... us.

We each make maps of our lives. Perhaps none do what our heroine accomplishes - drawing places into being simply by "mapping" them, or traveling the length and width of the universe(s) in an instant - but we draw our homes, our places of comfort; our "war zones" wherein we find things ranging from angry bosses to that grocery store clerk who for some strange reason manages to terrify us every time she weighs our grapes (yes, this is about me); and we draw the outer edges of our worlds, knowing that beyond them danger dwells.

And yet we go. We travel to the boundaries of our lives and comforts and then - as Sienna shows us how to do - we move past those boundaries, and into shadow...

... and there discover that we have, somehow, brought our brightness with us.

Sienna is all of us, and in her we find what every good Mapwalker MUST find: a road to travel; a quest to undertake; a guide or two to help us along the way, and, in the end, our hopes and dreams.

Thank you, Sienna, for showing an extraordinary path; and thank you, Ms. Penn, for your extraordinary stories and for the joy and light they bring.

#### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

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#### **Completely Melanie says**

I want to start off by saying that I received this book for review, but my opinions are my own and I am not paid for this review. That being said, Oh my gosh!!!! This book was soooooo good!!! Right from the very beginning of this book, it just took off full steam ahead with no slowing down! It's not a very long book, but they managed to pack a lot in just 192 pages! I loved it and would totally read the sequel!

I have a YouTube channel called Completely Melanie and one of the things I do on this channel is a reading vlog where each day I discuss what I am reading and my reactions to books. I said in my vlog many times while reading this book that I could totally see this playing out as a movie in my head. I think this book would make an awesome movie!

Sienna Farren's grandfather dies and leaves her his map shop in Bath, England. When she arrives, she is thrown into the world of Mapwalkers and learns that she possesses the magical ability to travel through maps. The Ministry of Maps is an agency that is charged with maintaining the borders between this world and the Borderlands which is the place where things that have been written out of history end up. It isn't a very nice place to be and the people there want into our world. Sienna must help the Ministry of Maps protect the borders at all cost!

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#### **Ilana says**

J.F.Penn, whose writings I often review on my blog because I love her writing, has a special art of creating characters and worlds that do stay for you long after finishing your book. Map of Shadows, newly released,

is the first in a new series aimed at exploring the mysterious meanings of maps and borders.

Sienna Farren - 'aimless and wandering for too long to choose a path forward' - was having just another uneventful day at the Oxford Library where she recently started a new job, when the announcement of the murdering of her grandfather, owner of an old map shop in Bath, will completely change her life. It is just the beginning of series of revelations that will put her in contact with a new world and a new self. The picturesque World Heritage Site of Bath, the place at the heart of Jane Austen life and works, is assigned as an ancient energy center, a door to a strange and troubled world, the Borderlands 'a place where this earth bleeds into another'.

Sienna is smoothly assuming the new role as owner of the shop where unusual things and people are taking place, accepting maybe too easily to embark on a search on the other side of the world for his long lost father and for putting a halt, together with other mapwalkers - a power whose meaning is about to understand and discover only by practice -, to an invasion of evil creatures that threatened destroying the world. This is just the beginning of what looks as an interesting new series.

What I particularly loved about this book, besides very vibrant and highly emotional visual images created through words, was the exploration of the sense and meaning of maps and borders, in a world, as usual, on the move. Skilfully, the current refugee crisis and the destructive war in Syria are also part of this first episode, as an anchor to everyday reality for the contemporary reader.

Map of Shadows is a page turning and dramatic read, which keeps you alert and promises a lot of interesting evolutions, with the seeds of new development already planted in this first installment.

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Disclaimer: Book offered by the author in exchange for an honest review

### **Veselina says**

This book was given to me by Netgalley to read for my honest review.

Imagine you can change the borders of the current world or even delete place from the world. The only thing you have to do is to change a map. What if there are places that are not on the maps we have, they are pushed from it just because we forgot about them.

Sienna is a girl that just found she can do those things also her father and grandfather were able to do them.

Refreshing, new fantasy book that takes you away from the traditional books and shows you brand new world.

Give it a go and hope you'll enjoy it.

I, myself, am looking forward for book two.

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### **Michael Chrobak says**

When I received a copy of this book to review, I was really looking forward to it. I hadn't read anything by this author, and after reading through some of the reviews, I thought this would be a book I could really fall in love with.

Sadly, I was wrong.

?

First of all, let me say, I did love the storyline and the concepts of this fantasy novel. The author definitely has some wicked creative skills. What crushed it for me was the quality of the writing, which almost made me place this in the DNF pile. The language was sticky and clunky, the descriptions were vague, and the whole thing came off flat and at times boring to read.

First, what I liked. The story starts off with a short chapter that explains almost everything you need to know about the world the Penn has created. There are humans with magical powers that can control various elements, some of which are tied to the use of maps, though not all. The main character is Sienna, who is the descendant of the first character we meet, an elderly man named Michael, who is her grandfather.

Michael is a Map Walker and controls and protects the border between the Earth-siders and the Shadow Cartographers. Between the two lands is a third realm known as the Borderlands. When he is challenged by one of the Shadow Cartographers in a battle of magic, Michael fails. He is old and his magic is weak. When he dies he leaves everything he owns, including a map shop, to his granddaughter Sienna. (This all happens in the first chapter, so I don't think I'm breaking the rule on spoilers)

Up until Chapter Three, I was totally entranced with the novel and was looking forward to this being a fast read. And, though I did complete it in just about a week, I had set it aside for at least two or three days without reading at all as I toyed with whether I wanted to finish it or not. I just found too many incidents of bad writing.

Let me give a few examples. Here's how Chapter 16 starts off. "Finn looked back into the forest. It was almost dark. He gestured ahead." Now, if this doesn't read completely matter-of-fact, vanilla and generic, then maybe I should read something else. And there were dozens upon dozens of examples just like this one.

In another part, the author is describing a creature she refers to as 'Giant Apes', and says that their 'meaty hands were the size of giant baseball mitts'. What does that even mean? Now I need to do research on my own to find out exactly how big giant baseball mitts are so I have something to reference. Also, nearly every other time the author refers to the Giant Apes hands, the word 'meaty' is used to describe them. At least 10-12 times if memory serves, though I'd have to go back and count to be sure. Trust that it was a lot and we'll leave it at that.

Also, I've read quite a bit of fantasy, and I know there are moments in these books that the reader needs to suspend disbelief and just go with the story, but I found myself rolling my eyes in disbelief more times than I can count. There was too much that just didn't feel right, like there was no way it could happen as the author wrote it.

For example, in one section, in the space of about 10 short paragraphs, one of the characters goes from losing someone they care about, to becoming violently angry and almost barbaric, to suddenly having romantic (or at least passionate) thoughts about another character. And based on the timeline of that section, those 10 paragraphs covered maybe 3-5 minutes of time.

I could go on and on about the things that I didn't like in this book, but I think I've said enough. Bottom line, I absolutely loved the creativity of the idea, but the execution in the telling of the story was far from enjoyable to read.

I can only give this book 2 stars.

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## **HornFan2 (Mike) says**

I was given an advance copy, by J.F. Penn for my honest review.

'Map of Shadows' falls in genre's that I don't typically read, but with J.F. Penn writing it, plus since I really like her Arkane Series and just figured I would miss out if I didn't read it.

Just like with Stephen King, Penn has the gift, to give her readers a heart pounding hellacious read, one that's well researched, puts you right in the pages, full of heart pounding twist and turns and leaves you begging for more.

It's really my type of book, due to the fast pace, it's action packed, full of suspense, tension filled, has you on the seat of your pants and like the good very evil theme.

Penn's characters are amazing the good ones or the evil ones, they just come to life, making the story all that better and your right their in the midst of the action.

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## **Shannon (Mrsreadsbooks) says**

This is the first book I have read by the author and I very much enjoyed it. This is definitely a unique fantasy book and also adds in a bit of magic. Sienna Farren inherits her grandfather's map shop in Bath, England after he is mysteriously murdered. After arriving in Bath, she finds her family is caught up with the Ministry of Maps, a mysterious organization who maintains the borders between this world and the Uncharter. Sienna soon discovers her own magical abilities, with the help of Mila Wendell. Sienna join the team of Mapwalkers when the Borderlands begin to push through the defenses ,which leads them on a mission to find the Map of Shadows. Along the way Sienna also uncovers secrets about her own past that she much try to sort out.

This is a fairly fast paced book and I enjoyed both Sienna as well as the author's writing style and world building. I look forward to reading the next book in this series. And the cover of this book is absolutely amazing!

Thank you to the author, J.F. Penn for sending me a review copy of this book.

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