



## Tethers

*Jack Croxall*

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**Tethers** Jack Croxall

**'You can't save someone from their own decisions.'**

In the wake of a cold Victorian winter, Karl Scheffer and Esther Emerson discover an anonymous journal filled with strange passages and bizarre scribblings. The journal soon draws them into a covert and sinister conspiracy, a conspiracy centred around an otherworldly artefact with the power to change everything ...

Karl and Esther have spent almost every day of their thirteen years in the quiet market town of Shrake. Stifled by their rural surroundings and frustrated by their unfulfilled ambitions, they find the allure of the journal's mysterious pages impossible to ignore. The book seems to be beckoning them away from Shrake, away from their homes and towards the coast where an unsolved disappearance has set a dark chain of events in motion.

The voyage Karl and Esther soon find themselves undertaking is one of desperate importance and true peril. It will change the way they see the world, and each other, forever.

*Tethers* is the first book of the *Tethers* trilogy.

## Tethers Details

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Author : Jack Croxall

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## From Reader Review Tethers for online ebook

### Emma Adams says

Tethers is an exciting story set in the Victorian era, with a fabulous blend of mystery, adventure and fantasy and an engaging pair of lead characters. We follow thirteen-year-old friends Karl and Esther as they discover a cryptic journal in their neighbour's house, which leads them into a bigger mystery surrounding a gemstone with strange powers. The plot carries the reader along at a nice pace, and there are plenty of surprises and twists along the way. Karl and Esther are sympathetic protagonists with a great spirit for adventure and a sense of humour.

The Victorian setting is well-researched and atmospheric, and the author does a great job of bringing the setting to life whilst also telling a compelling story. I was completely drawn into the book and found it to be refreshingly free of many of the clichés of YA literature. This is an imaginative and strong debut which works both on its own and as the first in a series, and is a must for any fans of Victorian-set YA – or for anyone just looking for a great adventure with a dash of magic.

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### Liz Barnsley says

So, my latest foray into the world of YA fiction, brought me here, to the Victorian setting of "Tethers", an absolute gem of a tale, not only to read for yourself but as a story to read to others. In it we meet Karl and Esther, two friends who find themselves on a grand adventure having discovered a notebook with strange notations and a mysterious gemstone. Chased by those with nefarious purposes they embark on a journey to find a missing girl, and to discover the true nature of the gem..with some help from a glorious cast of supporting characters. This journey forms the basis for the book. I loved it I have to say - I may have been saying that in a lot of my reviews lately but it just goes to show that I'm picking the right books from the myriad of choice I have open to me. What I loved: Karl and Esther are terrific. Esther is a girl after my own heart with her flashes of temper and great insight. Karl, a little calmer, more likely to look before he leaps, is the perfect counterpart and they compliment each other beautifully. The story itself is well imagined, paced just right and has a real sense of place and time. I can't actually find fault with it..if you want a negative - here's one. It was over too quickly! Hoping the second in the series is not far away. I look forward to meeting Karl and Esther again.

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### Jem says

Tethers has so many of the elements I enjoy in any book; adventure, mystery, friendship - and all set against the historical backdrop in the Victorian era. Karl and his friend Esther dragged me along in their wake and I found myself pushing aside other things to pick up the Kindle and read another few pages. The banter between the two made me smile; Esther is written as a partner in crime rather than a winsome female archetype and this is what I enjoyed most about Tethers.

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## Char says

For my pre read thoughts and reasons for my rating, please visit my blog From the Shadows I Review

I have to say this is another book that I thoroughly enjoyed. The story draws you in with beautiful description and a sidekick that shines so bright that I had to reach for my sunglasses! Did I mention how much I love the Victorian era and that made me love getting to create images of old fashioned scenes (although, I did miss making everyone drive Lamborghinis.). The writing made me want to read as much as possible and I would've finished this quicker but I had to turn into a gardening goddess for my mum and do her shopping. (It takes a lot of time being a good daughter you know!) I really did find this to be an enjoyable experience that I think everyone needs to experience.

Karl – He's our main character and while I did like him there were definitely other characters that I liked more \*cough\* Esther \*cough\*. A comment about his eyes early on in the book made me think about another book I just read 'Sky Song' by Sharon Sant which also features an MC with unusual eyes. (Maybe they were psychically linked while MC planning!) A part of me wanted to see him getting a bit more stuck into the action in ways that weren't accidental, however I did like that he wasn't hands on. It set him apart from other heroes.

Esther – She's easily my favourite character, she's courage and awesomeness all rolled into a Victorian 13 year old! She's nothing like the damsels in distress that grace far too many book and I appreciated that. More than I can ever tell you. I do wonder what the book would've been like from her POV... or maybe a split POV. I think Esther needs to be heard!! Anyway, I loved her fearlessness, it makes me want to be her best friend... actually she's only 13; I'll be her big sister instead.

Mr Cauldwell – He's an interesting character it has to be said, but of the characters featured throughout the story he's my least favourite. I believe that he genuinely cares about Karl and Esther but I feel like I want to know more about him. He's a character that we never really got to meet even though he's there a lot.

Harland – I adored Harland. He really inspired and helped Esther and a guy that can do that is alright as far as I'm concerned. He had contacts that really helped to push the story forward and make their journey feel like it had an end destination. I appreciated him. Go Harland!!

Overall this is a wonderful read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I say this but there are definitely things I'd have done differently but I appreciate what Jack did with the characters and the story and it's a testament to the quality of the story when you want to change things but still love how they are. The book managed to keep me occupied for long periods, which is a bit of a miracle considering my attention span, and was easy to read and wasn't littered with the errors that indie authors so often seem to miss. It did exactly what a book is supposed to do and let me tell you it did it well! That ending! Eurgh! I hate cliffhangers! Especially awesome ones!! Gimme Tethers 2!!!

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## ★Moonrise Books says

In a small, Victorian era English village called Shrake, Esther Emerson and Karl Scheffer have limited opportunities for adventure and even fewer opportunities to explore the world beyond the confines of the only village they have ever known. Karl's best chance for a successful future appears to rest in the promise

of a teaching apprenticeship. Karl's mother is excited about the possibility of Karl becoming a teacher, and expects Karl to share in her enthusiasm; however, Karl is less than enthused. And for an adolescent girl, Esther's opportunities are fewer still. The daughter of a local pub owner, Esther accepts that one day she will be expected to work in the family owned pub. Still, she is far from pleased with the prospect. And so, when Karl sneaks into the garden of an old, reclusive villager and spies a most unusual object, a series of events unfold, leading Karl and Esther away from Shrake and on an unexpected journey of magic, mystery, and discovery.

An anonymous notebook, inscribed with strange markings and messages, guides Karl and Esther to the discovery of an unusual object with otherworldly powers, offering glimpses into the future and warnings of dangers that lie ahead. They meet Mr. Cauldwell, described by Karl as having a "proud and mutton-chopped face" and others as they engage in gun battles and sword fights, confronting hidden dangers at every turn. As their journey continues over land and sea, and as Karl begins to put the pieces together, he witnesses a young girl in distress, clearly in danger and in need of assistance. More questions arise than are answered, as time and space are altered by the very choices and actions both Karl and Esther are making along the way ... choices that have far reaching implications for all those involved. But how much can be altered, and which events are so tightly tethered in time that they are inalterable? These are just some of the questions Karl and Esther must face on their journey in this magical, coming of age tale of adventure and self-discovery.

Tethers, the first installment in The Tethers Trilogy, is a fun read and a cleverly crafted tale. Much thought has been given to the development of the book's characters—fun, spirited individuals with strengths and quirks that make them believable and memorable. A great book! I look forward to the next installment in the series.

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### **Elisa says**

\*Visit my blog for a chance to win an e-book copy of this book - link at the end of the review\*

This book was not what I was expecting at all, in a very good way. At first it got me super curious and interested and then it got me surprised at the events that I was presented with.

Taking place in the 1800's, Tethers shows us a very different perspective of the Victorian times. Advanced science, seers (sort of) and brave children were not something I was expecting to find in this book. I honestly was completely impressed with Karl and Esther, they showed complete bravery when presented with some tough situations, especially when it came to have some friends die before their eyes.

Usually, in books like this - someone gets dragged into a spiral of situations they never thought they would be in - the characters try to adapt to the situations they're in but still show traces of weakness, of uncertainty and they may even end up making the wrong decisions. I didn't find any of this in this book. Taking into account that the main characters were children, this shows a very imaginative vision by the author.

Even though, I really liked this book, something that got me very intrigued through out the story was the fact that we never got to know how Karl and Esther's parents felt or how they dealt with the 'disappearance' of their children. Yes, another character (will not spoil who) sends a letter to their parents assuring them of their safety, but still, I would love to know how they felt once the children got home. Maybe on the next book we get to see what happened after their adventure.

Having a engaging plot and sometimes fast paced, Tethers allows you to connect with all the characters, to the point that you will suffer when some of them are lost forever. This fact allows the readers to become addicted with this book, not wanting to put it down for very long.

Karl and Esther are surprisingly refreshing when it comes to Young Adult characters. They are quite opposite from eachother, for instance, Karl is more conservative while Esther is more outgoing and sort of throws herself into situations without considering morals or even possible consequences. But they are really great friends, they would do anything for eachother and they compliment eachother so well that I feel like I should congratulate the author for not going with the obvious 'characters that are opposite are by definition rivals'. Another factor that made me enjoy this book so much has to do with 'love'. Ninety percent of times, in YA books, when the main characters are from opposite genders they tend to fall with eachother and this did not happen here.

When it comes to the writing, it was flawless for me. Even though English is not my first language, this book was easy to understand but still presented a sort of antique way of speaking, characteristic of the Victorian times. The characters had particular accents that made them unique and this again shows how talented Jack Croxall is.

Overall I really loved this book. I cannot wait for the next one especially since the ending of this book is pure torture...PURE TORTURE!! It will make you so curious about the next book that you won't know what to do with yourself for a while.

Read the review + author's interview on my blog - <http://liisadventuresinbookland.blogs...>

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### **Gary says**

An action packed debut novel from Jack Croxall that is fast paced, with a mix of adventure, mystery and fantasy.

There is a feeling of the Enid Blyton adventure books but with a lot more besides. The two lead characters are strong and well written featuring great dialogue and humorous banter.

It is a well paced novel that develops the characters and leads you through wanting to know more. The story is set in Victorian times and is part of a trilogy. This first novel sets the scene and characters and promises more exciting adventures to come.

A very strong debut novel from a talented young writer.

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### **Louise K. says**

An enjoyable read which is well paced and easy to read. Well worth the money. Just wish it had been a bit longer; I look forward to book 2.

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### **Laura says**

I wasn't so sure when I first started reading this book as I thought the accents in the prologue was strange, but then I was introduced to Karl and Esther from that moment I was hooked.

Karl and Esther go to Mr Emerson's house to have a snoop around while he is away, only to realise that they are not alone in the house. They quickly make their escape before they are seen and Karl picks up a book hidden beneath the floorboards that he thinks the intruders are looking for. They decide to take it to Mr Caudwells house, a friend of Mr Emerson to tell him that Mr Emerson is in danger. They show him the book to which they discover their names have been quickly scribbled in and the name of a place called Accelesthorp. This really got my interest- how had their names been put in there and who knew they would find the book?

This notebook is what starts Esther and Karl's dangerous journey. Neither have left the small village of Shrake before and their journey takes them to Nottingham. On the way they discover a curious purple stone. They quickly realise that this stone is important and Karl nearly loses his life when they come across two men trying to take it from them. What is it about the stone that it is wanted so badly?

The story is told in Karl's voice and I thought he was a great character, both he and Esther were extremely courageous 13 year olds and definitely should be commended for their bravery. I think Esther was my favourite character as she was always right in the thick of the action and it makes a change to have such a fearless girl character, rather than a damsels in distress.

I thought Jack set the Victorian scene very well and it was clearly well researched. And I do really like stories set in a certain period as it makes it just that little bit different.

I read this really quickly and it was a great debut novel. Jack leaves us in suspense with a big cliffhanger at the end!! I am now eagerly awaiting Tethers part two!!!

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### **Tony Gilbert says**

I am always reluctant to give a book five stars as no book is perfect. However, I couldn't not give Tethers five stars, it is just superb. It is a well written book and is so easy to read - I finished it in 2 days, just couldn't put it down! Although Tethers is technically a fantasy, it doesn't always feel like it because the characters are so believable. I implore you to read this, whether you are a fantasy fan or not, whether you are ten years old or one hundred. Just give it a go.

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### **Dan Thompson says**

The first time I read the synopsis for Jack Croxall's Tethers, I instantly knew that it was undoubtedly a book I very much wanted to read. A YA (young adult) novel set in the wake of a Victorian winter, where teenagers Karl Scheffer and Esther Emerson stumble upon a journal full of strange passages. Upon reading, Karl soon discovers both Esther and his names on the last page – a possible prediction? Quite abruptly, our lead teenagers soon realise that they have been pulled into a sinister conspiracy surrounding a strange otherworldly stone known as the Viniculum. Where will this bizarre purple stone lead them and what does the pictures Karl sees within in stone truly mean?

It's a very addictive and engaging plot indeed. It moves along at a nice pace, giving you plenty of time to get to know the characters, but also tempting you further along the pages, desperately wanting to know more. At first glance, Tethers seems to be a warming story of adventure gone awry, but as you get sucked into the real

conspiracy at its core, the adventure slowly transforms into a complicated thriller. It has got bags of atmosphere and when the science element of the story is slowly revealed, it becomes even more fascinating.

What I loved about the story was how it starts off with Karl and Esther sneaking into a house to steal a look at a metal box, which ultimately leads them on a quest to the coast. This section of the novel took me back to my younger days when I used to read Enid Blyton's The Famous Five stories. It really does feel like a good adventure, but with added danger of a possible murder.

Our two main characters, Karl and Esther, really do capture your attention, especially if you love YA novels. The dialogue between the two is perfectly written, with ounces of realism and humour chucked in for good measure. It is in these exchanges where we really get to know the two teenagers; Karl is often the more conservative out of the two, pondering morals and behaviour, whereas Esther is feisty, spunky and full of charming wit. Jack Croxall has provided us with real people whom we can really get behind and root for. And that is no easy feat. It's a fun male/female dynamic that doesn't mess around with love or attraction; giving the rapport of friends full centre stage. This is a refreshing idea and makes their bond that much stronger.

Jack Croxall also brings this novel to life with some great accents. Not only does it give the characters some locality in the world, but it also makes them more three-dimensional. If all the characters spoke the same, they would immediately become wooden and transparent, but thankfully there's none of that here.

It can easily be compared to Philip Pullman's Sally Lockheart stories, because of the Victorian time period, but for me, *Tethers* is a completely different sort of novel altogether. The rural setting of Shrake gives rise to wonderful descriptions and mood; something that is delivered differently in Pullman's work. Whether it be the rustic feel of dilapidated barns and lovely narratives of the pastoral natural world or the tit-bits of factual detail perfectly hidden within dialogue, you really get a sense of what life was like in the Victorian Countryside. It could be the subtle reference of commercial change (how the railway took away business from the canal boats), the use of specific Victorian illnesses such as 'consumption' or the use of archaic terminology that really gives us its Victorian era ambiance.

Sometimes, it can be extremely hard to find a voice in writing, but Jack Croxall seems to have found his almost instantly with his first go! His writing is extremely sharp and well-defined. You really get a sense of the author behind the words and he easily uses elevated language to give the reader respect. He uses a fantastic and faultless balance of imagery with vital action orientated sentences and the paragraphs just flow off the page. When you can get lost with the words, you really know that it is a great absorbing read.

What I really love about *Tethers* is the added element of fantasy that just spices things up a little more. With a storyline that revolves around an otherworldly stone, it can be difficult to see where it may lead and that is a good thing. It keeps you guessing. Despite working extremely well as a stand-alone novel, it's great (and annoying) to see a huge cliff-hanger at the end. It shows us that there is something even more deeper and ominous at work than what is revealed in here. As with almost every other part of this novel, the fantasy and realism is in perfect balance with each other, making things fantastical believable, yet the realism more harsh and accepted.

There really is a great bunch of characters in here, but sometimes you can get the feeling that some of the minor characters should get more involved. There is a character called Vivian, that has a pretty important scene roughly halfway through the novel, but towards the end, she becomes a little redundant; let's hope she features again in the second novel. But saying that, it never loses its chemistry by having too many characters. I also love how the character of Harland takes our little heroine, Esther, under his wing to teach

her the art of swordsmanship; which ultimately leads on to some pretty entertaining sword fights.

If I were to pick out a downfall of *Tethers*, I'm afraid it must be the chapter upon where our protagonists find themselves in Nottingham. Earlier in the book, Jack Croxall gave us wonderful literary imagery, but in Nottingham it is somewhat limited. I would have loved to read about the life and times of this great place. In an era where change was great, full of industrialisation and fantastic discoveries, surely more goings on could have happened. The characters get through Nottingham to their destination just a little too quickly for me. More description of environment would have really set this part of the book alive and given opportunity for the reader to observe the great differences between Victorian life in both the countryside of Shraye and the urban lifestyles of Nottingham.

I loved this novel; it simply fulfilled the expectations the blurb promised and introduced us back into a time often forgotten. The heavenly marriage of fantasy and realism heighten the novel's impression and with a great variety of characters (of all ages) means you can see the faultless chemistry between them all. It's a novel that has very different levels; starting off as an entertaining adventure story, albeit with a hint of eeriness on the horizon, before exploding into a sword swashing, rifle firing gem of a book that gives you not only original imagination, but also rational science in an era where invention and technology was in a boom. *Tethers* is an adrenaline fuelled, action packed, smart thinking tale that captures your attention and leaves it aghast that you have to wait until the next story in the series to find out the profound conspiracy at its heart. Jack Croxall is an exciting new author to watch, mark my words.

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### **Rebecca Bradley says**

A great debut with strong characters. My favourite being the young girl Esther. She was strong and feisty and a really likeable character. She could have done with being more forefront in the story, but she came through well anyway.

The point in the story when I found out where *Tethers* came in was a great point for me. It had a stronger meaning than I imagined and wove its way right through to the ending with significance.

Not my usual kind of read, but one I found I enjoyed.

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### **Sharon Sant says**

As soon as I heard about this book I was desperate for it to be good. The whole idea was one that I loved. I had to wait a while for its release, but when I finally got to read it, I was relieved to find that it was good... not just good, but brilliant. Somewhere between Pullman's Sally Lockhart mysteries and Moonfleet, this is a rip-roaring debut novel. Sharply written with well observed characters that you can root for, *Tethers* has you turning pages faster than Ronald MacDonald can throw out burgers. Jack Croxall has a refreshing new voice and offers an alternative YA novel – the rare sort that a boy might actually want to read as well as girls. An imaginative premise, a wonderfully constructed and convincing world that I didn't want to leave, the final pages of *Tethers* had me desperate to find out what happens next. Roll on *Tethers II*!

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## **Erin says**

I've given 'Tethers' five stars because I felt it was really exemplary of its genre - all of its genres!! Part fantasy, part sci-fi, a little bit steampunkesque! Full review to come!

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## **Laura says**

Without sounding hyperbolic, I think this book has changed my life.

Fantasy is a genre I've tried time and time again to immerse myself in but I've never succeeded. There seems to be a small part of my brain that refuses to suspend disbelief and constantly goes NO. THAT WOULDN'T HAPPEN IN REAL LIFE. Yes brain, well done: we are reading a fantasy novel, that is why.

I've known about Tethers for a long time but I've never really had much of an urge to read it even after Megan protested countless times that I should. But yesterday Tethers turned the grand old age of one and my curiosity got the better of me. I went to Amazon, downloaded the free sample, started reading and couldn't stop. Without a second thought I downloaded the whole book and got lost in Karl and Esther's world.

Karl and Esther, two young teenagers, are our main characters. Karl, ever curious, has spent time covertly sneaking into Mr Stratham's garden and surveying the inside of his huge house. A small silver box piques his interest but he's caught before he can explore any further. One morning, promising his mother he will stay away from Mr Stratham's house, Karl informs Esther of what he saw and how desperately he wants to find out what it is. Against his mother's orders, they sneak back into Stratham's garden, only to find the silver box gone and the house ransacked. Before they leave, Karl finds an old journal and the last page of the journal sends them into a whole mess of confusion. For there, on the last page of the journal, the final entry states: Karl and Esther.

Their names are in this journal, but why? How? Who is the author?

Karl and Esther set out on a journey to discover what this means and soon they are caught up in a dangerous and adrenalin filled adventure that puts friendship, trust and bravery to the test.

Let me just set the record straight. This is a fantasy book and I UNDERSTOOD and ENJOYED every last second of it. And no, I don't think I'm ill.

Oh my goodness, where to start?

Firstly, the characters are incredible. They are so well described that you can't help but form the most beautiful portraits of them as you read about their physical prowess and individual mannerisms. Not only are they richly described, they also develop beautifully over the course of the novel and interact with each other in the most believable of ways. Without a doubt, my favourite character was Esther: she's a feisty one that refuses to adhere to what's expected of a young woman; instead opting to learn how to sword fight. What a girl!

Karl was also another favourite, he was bold, brave and extremely intelligent and I found that the two together created the most fantastic team. A whole host of other characters: Harland, Mr Caudwell and Vivian (to name a few) were also so fantastically written about that slipping into their world was effortless.

The plot was so cleverly formed that I could not predict where it would go and what challenges the

characters would face next. It was perfectly paced and ridiculously addictive which meant I couldn't sleep until I'd finished it. I was so invested in these characters and their world that I didn't want the book to end!

Lastly, Jack's writing style. Oh Jack, how you nearly made me weep with pleasure at your command of the English language. Every description was just beautiful and the way you told this story was flawless. Not a single word was out of place and throughout the entirety of the book I would often pause and reread descriptions because they were so tactile and tangible.

I really cannot find the words to express how much I enjoyed this book. Not only has Jack introduced me to Esther and Karl's world, he's also made me believe in a genre that I've never believed in before. I cannot wait to start slowly exploring more fantasy titles but I desperately cannot wait for the next book from Jack.

*Tethers* is the first book in a trilogy with *UNWOVEN* and *TORN* to follow. I cannot wait to catch up with these characters again and see where they are. My excitement is almost too much to deal with!!

So Jack. You now have a massive new fan girl and someone in complete awe of your story telling abilities!

I cannot recommend this book enough.

A fast paced, action packed adventure filled with lovable characters and unexpected twists that is written so lyrically and beautifully you will want to read it over and over again.

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