

For Immediate Release

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A spirited young girl. A proud mother. Two women. One story unfolding within sight of prayer filled temples and the ringing of church bells. A heart-wrenching page turner that is sure to be one of the most beloved debuts of the year

A DISOBEDIENT GIRL

A Novel by Ru Freeman

In the tradition of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us*, Ru Freeman offers a novel about two women, connected by a shared and tragic history, yet separated by their respective destinies. Set in the author's native Sri Lanka, during a time of political unrest, **A DISOBEDIENT GIRL (Atria Books; On-sale July 21, 2009; ISBN: 978-1-4391-0195-7; \$25.00)** is a uniquely told story of desire and loss that is drawing rave reviews.

In a beautiful country where fate, religion and sorrow are like living beings, five year old Latha is brought into the Vithanage home as a servant girl and companion to Thara, the daughter of the house and a girl her own age. Though their girlhood is spent together in intimate friendship, Latha grows up yearning constantly for the things that are denied to her: the fragrance of roses, glass bangles, sandals and the love of a boy. When, at fifteen, she finally rebels against being sentenced to a life of servitude, she breaks Thara's heart and sets in motion a chain of deceit, despair, anger and irreconcilable hurt.

"Be a proper servant indeed. Her math was better than Thara's, her social studies and science were better than Thara's too, and she didn't even get extra tuition like Thara did. Even her handwriting, curving with perfect *ispili* and *pāpili*, was better than Thara's. In fact, the only things Thara had that were better than Latha's were her clothes and her fancy boyfriend. And even Thara's fancy boyfriend looked at her, Latha, in *that way*."

Interwoven with Latha's story is that of Basis who, in a different time, dreams of the past, of what life should have held for her and what it has taken away. With nothing but her sense of dignity, her determination, and her love for her children to guide her, Basis dares to leave the untrustworthy shores of her abusive husband's home, to take her children to safety in the cool mountains. But between the home she leaves behind and the sanctuary of the unknown lies a treacherous journey and the truth that every gain will extract its own terrible price, and connect her life with Latha's in the most shocking and unexpected way.

Ru Freeman's **A DISOBEDIENT GIRL** is a triumphant debut in which the author brings to life the compelling voices of two women whose hearts are set on controlling their own destinies

Inspired in part by a young servant girl named Latha that the author knew from her childhood in Sri Lanka, **A DISOBEDIENT GIRL** is a gripping exploration of personal desire set against the volatile backdrop of class and prejudice, and sure to be a must-read novel of this summer.

Ru Freeman is a Sri Lankan writer whose political journalism and fiction have been published internationally. She lives in Bala Cynwyd, PA.

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By Ru Freeman

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