IN THE MIX

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Quest for Fire

No dragons, but one fierce woman coming up in *Nightflyers*.

Randee Dawn

Jay L. Clendenin/Los Angeles Times/Contour RA

One of the challenges of being cast in a new adaptation of a George R. R. Martin property is this: at least some fans are probably expecting Syfy's *Nightflyers*, which is based on Martin's 1980 novella by the same name, to be a bit like *A Song of Ice and Fire* but in space — complete with shocking mother-of-dragons moments.

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"I love *Game of Thrones*," Jodie Turner-Smith says. "But *Nightflyers* is something completely different. I'm not walking out of any fires naked. Yet."

Turner-Smith's portrayal of genetically modified human Melantha Jhirl should put a lot of questions to rest. Melantha is "an amalgam of pure energy," she explains — like several *GoT* heroines and anti-heroines — but that's pretty much where the comparisons end.

Simultaneously, anyone wondering if the model-turned-actress can carry her own in a tight ensemble show about space, time, technology and terrifying mother figures should recalibrate their expectations: Turner-Smith is fierce .

Jamaican by birth, Turner-Smith was raised in the U.K. and U.S. with a "transcontinental family," she relates from the show's set in Limerick, Ireland.

Early modeling and music-video stints led to a string of small roles over the past five years; even as late as 2017 she was still getting bit parts as "Statuesque Woman" or "Siren No. 2." But a recurring role this past year on TNT's *The Last Ship* gave her wide smile and camera-friendly presence a chance to truly pop.

Next up: *Nightflyers*, where the diverse cast of characters challenges gender distinctions. "This cast opens up a dialogue about race," she says. "I knew Mel was sexually fluid, and that was appealing to me — it's awesome to have a woman who's morally complex, and a character who's interesting and dynamic."

Overall, she's happy to see the science-fiction genre spread its wings regarding diversity. "These are baby steps in the larger range of humanity," she says. "We're not solving cancer, but you can insert messages into people's consciousness."

With *Nightflyers* expected later this fall, Turner-Smith stands ready to take on the world — and maybe even the universe. "I want to do everything," she says, laughing. "To try on many hats, walk in many shoes — don't limit yourself. There are many sides to me. No barriers."

This article originally appeared in *emmy* magazine, Issue No. 9, 2018

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On the heels of eight seasons on *Castle* — and his too-short, but beloved, time on *Firefly* — Nathan Fillion arrives in another starring role.

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