

Amber Bird

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[Photo credit: Jesse Means. High res photos on Amber's website.]

Bio

Amber Bird is...A writer, a rockstar, and a sci-fi simulacrum...The author of the Peaceforger books (gripping near-future sci-fi), a published poet, the front of post-punk/post-glam band Varnish, and half of transatlantic Autistic musical duo The Companions...An Autistic introvert, an idealist, a geek, and a dreamer who was (and still is) saved by others' art and is trying to return the favor...A lapsed actor and, yes, the model for that Magic card.

Heeding advice like "write what you know" and "write the book your younger self needed," Amber's current and planned books all have main characters who are Autistic, queer, and women/girls or non-binary. And many of them won't use just violence or STEM-based solutions to resolve everything. (Sci-fi and fantasy give us the opportunity to remember that many kinds of people have something to add and in many different ways.)

Q&A

> What's it like finishing a trilogy?

Terrifying. (What if I get it wrong?) Satisfying. (Gold star to me for just finishing it.) Exhilarating. (My beta readers said I got it right!) And it's a bit of a relief. I made it through that looming task and I can start working on the next book guilt-free.

> What will you be saddest to leave behind as you move on from the Peaceforgers trilogy?

If I were truly leaving them behind, I'd miss my characters; they've been part of my internal landscape since I was about 15 and are like old friends. But, because of how long they've been there, I don't expect they'll ever be fully gone, probably just pushed a bit to the back as I focus on other characters in other stories. I'm sure I'll find myself idly imagining their future lives when my brain isn't otherwise occupied. After all, my brain has been entertaining multiple character friend groups at once since childhood.

> Is the diversity of your characters meant to be a statement?

It's just meant to reflect the reality of the world I live in and people I know. (And, honestly, I can do better at showing the diversity. For example, there's racial diversity in my head that never made it to the page, and I don't feel great about that.) It might not have ruined my life to read mainly about straight, white, cis-gendered, non-disabled men, but growing up with more stories of people who were more like me would surely have made wee-Amber a fiercer, brighter creature. And that sort of thing shapes futures.

> Do you think the grim future of the Peaceforgers trilogy is fact or fiction?

Whilst there's definitely fiction in there, I believe there's too much fact. It doesn't take more than a second of reading news to see that humanity seems, at best, inclined towards inaction and, at worst, just as inclined towards being horrible to people, animals, and the world. I do believe humans have the capacity for good, and so I hope to be regularly pleasantly surprised by the actual future.

> Are there more stories coming from you?

Absolutely! I've currently got about eight additional sci-fi novels in various stages of development and at least one contemporary fantasy idea. I've been working on my stack of poetry as well, with some ideas for getting more of it into the world. I don't really think I'm a short story writer, but I *am* poking at some flash fiction ideas. Expect my list of published works to keep growing.

Peace State

(Peaceforgers: Book Three)
Release date 12 October, 2021

The eagerly anticipated conclusion to the Peaceforgers trilogy

After all they've sacrificed and the lines they've crossed to keep the planet from becoming a literal dystopia, Katja and her surviving allies aren't sure they—or the human race—will survive 2050. At least not with their free will intact.

Battered and betrayed, they make their plans. But the Peaceforgers have plans of their own and fewer and fewer reasons to hold back.

As the list of casualties grows...As the number of invaded minds and infected bodies soars...As the stakes become increasingly grim and the Peaceforgers escalate their attacks...As the very elements and assets she depends on most are turned against her...Katja realizes it might take more than clever code to win this one.

It turns out the future actually can get darker. And the facts keep pointing towards one solution. Want to save the light? **Hack your humanity.**



Sample

Riles stood up so quickly zir chair threatened to fall over. “Shit! They’re here.” Zie started slapping computers closed.

I paused a moment, confused. “‘They’?”

Zie urgently hissed, “Narnia time.”

I leapt up too, a straight shot of adrenaline crackling through me like terrified lightning. “Fuck!”

If we were doing Narnia, it could only be one “they.” “They” as in the Peaceforger thugs. The ones in black and masks, with guns and hammering fists. The ones who’d beat the shit out of Riley. The ones who’d shot Quinn...and then Jonny and Bryan.

They’d finally come to kick down our door. And we didn’t have the safety that every other person behind every other door they’d kicked down had. We were actually the ones they wanted. We were already disappeared and, therefore, could be permanently disappeared without consequences. We wouldn’t get off as easily as those in our decoy rooms had.

We rushed to clear everything that would tip off the thugs that this was, in fact, the room they’d hoped for every other time. That we were, in fact, the ones who’d killed their people and threatened their “benevolent” dystopian plans for us.

Before I felt sure we’d done all we needed, the cameras we were keeping half an eye on told us they were already in the corridor outside our door. We rushed to the big wardrobe against the back wall of our room, cramming in like rabbits diving for their warrens when the dogs come.

We held our collective breath, frozen and listening intently. If we had been rabbits, our ears would have quivered with the effort, if not with the fear. We had our bags with our most essential items on our backs, and we crouched like we thought we could actually run. (Holy shit; we really were freaked out bunnies...) Riley had tucked away zir phone, probably feeling more need for both hands free than for eyes on the cameras. It was fair to assume we knew where they were.

And then we were sure of their location as we heard the click of them opening our door. They must have hacked the lock, afraid of another run in with startled thugs with guns, so they could slip in quietly. But the tiny alarm we’d put on it was sounding in our earbuds. I quickly tapped my bud to turn down the high-pitched squeal of it in my ear.

I gave Riles a quick, questioning look, inclined my head towards the exit. Should we bolt for the door?

Zie shook zir head once, sharply.

With nobody in sight, the thugs stopped being silent. They closed the door to our suite behind them. There’d be no witnesses for what went down in our room.

One of them commanded, “Search everything. Find me proof of who’s here. Or really impress me and find an actual person.”

Everyone laughed a little at that, unaware for the moment that they might find a person.

A new voice jokingly called out, “Anyone quaking in the tub or stuffed under the bed?”

Meaty man voices all chuckled at that.

Fortunately, that wasn’t followed by the noise of a room being tossed. Maybe they’d wandered into enough wrong suites by now that they were open to the idea that this was the wrong room and they might want to leave the occupant ignorant of their visit.

They were no longer silently gliding though; I could clearly hear the footsteps of some big meatsack crossing to the wardrobe. I cringed back then froze at the soft squeak, loud as the alarm in my ears had been, as Big Meatsack opened the wardrobe...