

Chocoverse Media Kit Amber Royer * Angry Robot Books

Telenovela Meets Space Opera in a Galactic War Over Chocolate



Get ready for rollicking adventure and over-the-top comedy!

*The Chocoverse is a homage to the cheesiness of the telenovela tradition, complete with all the heart and optimism that implies. There's a lot in the series about overcoming prejudice and finding family inside blended cultures and backgrounds. The messages of love, mercy, and hope run through all three books, summed up by Tawny's media campaign centered around the slogan **Mercy Is a Gift**.*

Bo Benitez, failed telenovela star, runs to the other side of the galaxy and enrolls in cooking school to escape the vulturazzi, only to be drawn back home when her alien boyfriend convinces her to steal the source of chocolate. She winds up in trouble, running for her life, into danger bigger than she ever imagined — and an opportunity to change the entire galaxy forever.

Through the course of the trilogy, Bo has to learn the hard way that self-worth doesn't come from popularity, the media, or even the other people who care about her. But can she handle being pushed back into the spotlight, after fleeing in shame?

Free Chocolate: Latina culinary arts student, Bo Benitez, becomes a fugitive when she's caught stealing a cacao pod from the heavily-defended plantations that keep chocolate, Earth's sole valuable export, safe from a hungry galaxy. Forces arraying

against her including her alien boyfriend and a reptilian cop. But when she escapes onto an unmarked starship things go from bad to worse: it belongs to the race famed throughout the galaxy for eating stowaways. Surrounded by dangerous yet hunky aliens, Bo starts to uncover clues that the threat to Earth may be bigger than she first thought.

Free Chocolate Book Trailer: <https://youtu.be/VIR3f3MRnws>

Pure Chocolate: To save everyone she loves, Bo Benitez is touring Zant, home of the murderous, shark-toothed aliens who so recently tried to eat her. In the midst of her stint as Galactic paparazzi princess, she discovers that Earth has been exporting tainted chocolate to the galaxy, and getting aliens hooked on cocoa. Bo must choose whether to go public, or just smile for the cameras and make it home alive. She's already struggling with her withdrawal from the Invincible Heart, and her love life has a life of its own, but when insidious mind worms intervene, things start to get complicated!

Pure Chocolate Book Trailer: <https://youtu.be/hs8M7HXWbhA>

Fake Chocolate: When disease ravages Earth's cacao plantations, Bo Benitez returns home to help with the media spin to hide that chocolate is in danger of being lost forever. HGB has come up with a new product – one which doesn't appease the cocoa-addicted murderous, shark-toothed aliens threatening to invade the planet. Someone has to smooth things out. Just when Bo starts to make headway, someone tries to kidnap her. While trying to avoid more would-be-kidnappers, Bo finds out that HGB is developing a cure for withdrawal from the Invincible Heart. Will she let her need to be physically whole again tie her to HGB and its enigmatic CEO? When she gets a key piece of evidence that would unravel secrets from three different planets, she has tough choices to make about the future of her world and its place in the galaxy.

Short Story: When Kromish Eyes are Smiling: Bo winds up having to cooperate with one of Brill's friends after the two of them are kidnapped by a bounty hunter with a penchant for strategy games.



Author Bio:

Amber Royer is the author of the high-energy comedic space opera Chocoverse series (Free Chocolate, Pure Chocolate available now. Fake Chocolate coming April 2020). She teaches creative writing classes for teens and adults through both the University of Texas at Arlington Continuing Education Department and Writing

Workshops Dallas. She is the discussion leader for the Saturday Night Write writing craft group. She spent five years as a youth librarian, where she organized teen writers' groups and teen writing contests. In addition to two cookbooks co-authored with her husband, Amber has published a number of articles on gardening, crafting and cooking for print and on-line publications. They are currently documenting a project growing Cacao trees indoors.

Previous interviews with Amber include:

The Quillery Blog -- <http://qwillery.blogspot.com/2018/06/interview-with-amber-royer-author-of.html>

Writer's League of Texas Meet the Members --

<https://writersleagueoftexas.wordpress.com/2018/06/07/meet-the-members-amber-royer/>

Voyage Dallas -- <http://voyagedallas.com/interview/art-life-amber-royer/>

Contact Info:

Amber Royer * dandylyon85@hotmail.com *
www.amberroyer.com

Repped By: Jennie Goloboy, Donald Maass
Literary Agency

Facebook: @amberroyerauthor

Twitter: @amber_royer

Instagram – [amberroyerauthor](https://www.instagram.com/amberroyerauthor)



Presentation Topics:

Royer is an experienced educator and presenter. She is at home on panels relating to writing craft, space opera, and humor.

She is also a good solo presenter for writing related topics such as:

- Villains as the Mirror of Heroes
- Creating Characters People Get Attached To
- Character Agency
- Worldbuilding (especially worldbuilding economics and designing aliens)
- Including Invented Language in Fiction
- Creativity Jumpstart

She is also available to talk about non-fiction topics including:

- Writing about Food
- The History of Chocolate
- How Chocolate is Grown and Processed
- Chocolate Tastings

From top: Prepping to present at the Dallas Chocolate Festival 2018, With a fan after the Creativity Jumpstart at ArlingCon 2018, With the organizers after my presentation for Fresh Fiction's Literary Tea series, Teaching for Writing Workshops Dallas, On a panel for the 2017 NaNoWriMo Kickoff.



Want a Sample?

You can read the opening section of *Free Chocolate* on Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/Free-Chocolate-Chocoverse-Amber-Royer/dp/0857667505/>

You can also read the opening section of *Pure Chocolate* on Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/Pure-Chocolate-Chocoverse-Amber-Royer/dp/085766753X>

Fake Chocolate should be available soon on NetGalley.

<https://www.netgalley.com/>

If you're not on NetGalley, contact Amber for a review copy of *Fake Chocolate*. If you need access to Book 1 first, contact Angry Robot Books.

<https://www.angryrobotbooks.com/contact/>

Book Details

Fake Chocolate – April 14, 2020, Golden Tip Press, \$12.99. \$12.99. Available as paperback and e-book, in the US.

Pure Chocolate – Angry Robot Books, \$12.99. Available as paperback and e-book, in the US and the UK.

Free Chocolate, Angry Robot Books, \$12.99. Available as paperback and e-book, in the US and the UK.

Hashtags

#welcometothechocoverse #returntothechocoverse #backtothechocoverse #foodiefiction
#purechocolate #freechocolate #fakechocolate #freechocolateisthebestchocolate
#bobenitezrocks #benitezgirlsrock #teamb Brill #chestladeservesallgoodthings
#telenovelainspired #spaceopera #adventurefiction #adventure #galaxy #galactic #novelas
#spanglish #latinaprotag #deathbychocolate #paparazzi princess #poweroflove

Feature about Free Chocolate on the Barnes & Noble SFF Blog:

The Great Cocoa Heist: You'll Eat Up Amber Royer's Free Chocolate by Ross Johnson

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-fi-fantasy/the-great-cocoa-heist-youll-eat-up-amber-royers-free-chocolate/>

Features Angle

Amber Royer co-authored a choco-cookbook called *There are Herbs in My Chocolate*. In part, the cookbook was the inspiration for the *Chocoverse* (along with a tour of a cacao plantation in Samana, Dominican Republic, shortly before NaNoWriMo). The Royers put together a shortened version of the cookbook when they were presenting on both cooking and gardening at events for their local herb society. (Amber had a paid column on herb gardening and cooking for years on *Dave's Garden*.) She's done even more research on chocolate since the first *Chocoverse* book came out, and since the focus in book 3 is the cacao trees (which in this sci-fi future are being threatened by a virulent plague) she and Jake are trying a hand at growing them, indoors, in Texas. Amber is documenting this with weekly photos on Instagram. There are real diseases that threaten chocolate, causing farmers to lose a significant portion of the chocolate crop each year.

Chocoverse Tips Sheet

--In this series, you get:

Alien Dragons

An Adorable Corgi

Laser Monkey Robots

Space Pirates

Shark Monster Soldiers

and oh, so much chocolate!

-- This trilogy is intended as a novela on the page – on a galactic scale. (Structurally, this is very different from a dystopian trilogy. Novela heroines win through love and redemption. They change everyone around them.) It kind of makes sense – since many novelas were books first. The Chocoverse plays with a lot of the tropes that come up repeatedly in soap operas no matter what country of origin. Royer says, “My agent asked me at one point if Bo is this ‘verse’s Deadpool, since she used to be a novela star, and definitely notices that parts of her life have dovetailed with the common tropes. I didn’t want to take it quite that far. She doesn’t know she’s IN a soap opera. She just sees the parallel between these space-opera scale events and the trope and notes that living inside it isn’t as easy as it looks on TV.”

-- The Chocoverse may read like YA, but it is intended for adults. Bo is 24 at the beginning of Book 1, and Brill is 28 (in estimated Earth years). In Book 2, Bo is very concerned whether or not Brill will be able to overcome his family’s deep-seated opposition to finally propose. However, it does share some of the stylistic conventions common in YA: first person present tense writing, high energy, casual use of language. And the romance is kept sweet and the action mild, so it’s fine for grades 8 and up.

-- Portmanteaus abound in this ‘verse, along with a ton of slang and made up words. Royer says, “I was intentionally experimenting with the effect a First Contact would have on human language. These smashed words come from the influence of the culture these future humans first encounter, who have emotion words with shades of meaning for everything. The smashed verbs are often me playing with onomatopoeia. There’s actually a lot more going on linguistically than you will see on a casual read.”

-- Language also brings her characters together, as Bo's Krom (alien) boyfriend starts learning Spanish and she starts learning Krom. Being able to communicate in the language of each others' hearts – and making cultural mistakes during all the adventures they go through -- allows them to understand each other as people, without assumptions. There's a scene in Book 2 where Brill and a character who was previously prejudiced against Krom (who many Earthlings blame for ruining Earth's chance at a respected place in the Galaxy) bond over watching cheesy Spanish soap operas.

-- The Chocoverse isn't a place for easy answers or black-and-white good guys vs. bad guys. Bo commits treason within the first few chapters of the book, by stealing a cacao pod to share with the aliens. Brill convinces her to do it by saying it will prevent both galactic and civil war. He's not exactly wrong, but that's not his main motive for getting his hands on chocolate. Frank, the HGB assassin tasked with keeping Bo from getting the cacao off the planet, honestly believes that without the chocolate monopoly, Earth will find itself the protectorate of an alien empire. The secrets that the four main planets involved in the books – Earth, Krom, Evevron and Zant – are hiding show that history is complex.

-- A lot of chocolate is prepared, consumed, ruined, stolen, etc. in these books. Prepare for the possibility it may make you hungry. There is a serious side to all of this, though. Royer says, "I know it sounds silly to have an economy based on chocolate, but historically, there is a precedent: the Aztecs main form of trade was based on cacao. There were even crooks who forged "cacao beans" by either carving fake beans out of avocado pits and coating them with wax, or hollowing the beans out and filling them with mud."

-- Royer herself is an avid cook, and likes to experiment with making things from scratch. She has successfully made small-batch bean to bar chocolate in her kitchen. She has also made jam out of cacao pulp. She has also traveled to several parts of the world where chocolate is grown.

-- She also maintains an Instagram feed of writing prompts – and chocolate and coffee pics. Wherever she travels, she makes it a point to find local small businesses that specialize in chocolate and coffee and talk to them about their experiences.

Sample Q&A:

Q. How much is Bo like you?

Emotionally Bo and I are a lot alike. We're both the first person in the room to want a microphone if it's to teach or to entertain – and the last one to want to be the center of attention if it's to talk about our problems. We both need social connections, which is why perhaps the cruelest thing I've done (or plan to do) to Bo in the entire series is to have let her run away to that little planet on the other side of the galaxy where we find her at the beginning of *Free Chocolate*, trying to pretend that it doesn't matter that she's far away from everyone she cares about. Despite the fact that demographically, we're drastically different, I have a feeling that if we both took a Myer's Briggs, we'd wind up with the same classification.

Q. Who is the most fun character from the Chocoverse to write?

A. That would have to be Chestla. On her home planet, Chestla's a humanoid alpha predator. But her people are also incredibly social. At heart, she's both a protector and a nurturer – but she's also the girl that wears purple glitter claw-polish and dots her "I"'s with hearts. She's left home in disgrace and wound up as Bo's RA on a planet where neither of them feel at home. Because most people feel an involuntary prey response when around her, Chestla's best efforts at fitting in are rebuffed. In one of my favorite moments in the first book, Bo thanks Chestla for saving her life, and Chestla's response is, "Remember that next time there's a party."

Q. What character in your book are you least likely to get along with?

A. Gavin. Because reasons. He's Brill's best friend, and I can see what Brill sees in him. He is a good guy on his own terms – loyal to his wife and kids and would do absolutely anything for Brill. And he never actually intends to be mean to others. But he judges humanity based on what it used to be back in Victorian times. And yet . . . he grew on me over the course of the series, especially after he winds up taking responsibility for Bo in the third book. He's still arrogant and presumptuous and way too blunt. But there's something to him that's noble.

Q. If you could spend a day with a character from your book, who would it be and what would you do?

A. Brill. When I did his character interview, he tried to bribe me to ensure he'd survive the story – with what (when it showed up in a scene I later wound up having to cut) turned out to be a priceless piece of jewelry fashioned from green-toned Krom amber with the inclusion of an extinct insect that is part of the key to figuring out the true history of the Krom. Can you imagine what I might uncover if I spent a whole day with him? Besides, he's got an amazing sense of humor and would fit right in with my friends. I think we'd all just wind up hanging out on his ship. Since he's a trader specializing in far-flung foodstuffs, and we're all foodies, we'd have to get him to let us sample a few things. Including yewstral, which is from Krom. And since Krom irises change colors, especially when said Krom is stressed or lying, we'd have to play a board or card game just so I could watch chromashift in action.

Q. What was the first book that made you cry?

A. I was an avid reader even as a kid, so I don't know if it was actually the first time I cried over a book, but the one that shattered me was *Bridge to Terabithia*. That character death shook me to my core. There are hard lessons you have to learn as a kid, and sometimes a book changes everything. Character deaths are one of the hardest things to write well, and that book could be used as a textbook example of how to do it right: give the character unfinished relationships, make him sympathetic, make him real, and then pull the rug out from under the reader. I hope I do it half as well in my own work.

Q. What one book has most influenced your writing.

A. If I have to choose just one, I would say Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. I love the dynamic created between Jim and Silver, who are on opposite sides, and yet emotionally *are* what the other is missing. Silver's the father figure Jim lost, and Jim represents the honor Silver wishes he could get back. This dichotomy is actually quite similar to the dynamic growing between Bo and one of the other characters over the course of the series. Another thing I love about *Treasure Island* is how nothing is ever wasted. Every bit of foreshadowing comes back up, in unexpected and important ways.

Q. What's one thing in common between most of the books you read?

A. As far as genre and subject, I read eclectically. I obviously read a lot of sci-fi, but I also adore a good cozy mystery, and will always have a soft spot for YA. Basically,

if it's not super dark, I'm in. One of my writing students recently asked me for a list of my favorite classics. I sent her a list that included Little Women, Frankenstein, The Great Gatsby, Vanity Faire, Emma and Fahrenheit 451. And I realized that basically, these are all character studies at heart. Which makes sense. Because as much as there is capital-P PLOT happening in all my work, I still chose to write the Chocoverse in first person. Because I believe that plot won't matter to the reader unless the characters are changed by it, shaken to their very cores and transformed so that the reader can be transformed a little bit too.

Q. What do you love most about the writing process?

A. There's something to be said about each stage of the process. There's such a spark of discovery when you're outlining a book, doing character interviews, getting to know the world and the people. And there's a sense of satisfaction that comes from shaping a completed work into a polished finished product. But the best part has to be that first draft. It's the part in between, where you can see things starting to arc in the direction that final draft will need to go, but you still have the freedom to change things and backtrack and figure stuff out. It's like the outline was the hypothesis, and now you're getting to play mad scientist and run the experiment without any safety protocols. It could blow up in your face. But more likely, it's going to be more amazing than you ever imagined.

Q. Anything you'd like to say to your readers and fans?

A. Yes. Thank you. You guys took a chance and spent your limited budget of money and time in my quirky 'verse and some of you have found an amazing connection to some of these characters. I am still blown away by that. If there's a character you love, or part of the world in this or any novel that excites you, let that author know. It totally makes our week.



Free Chocolate Reviews:

Full text of the Publisher's Weekly Review:

In writing teacher Royer's clever debut, humans have turned Earth into a fear-filled bunker after learning about the existence of aliens. Earth's sole valuable commodity on the interplanetary market is chocolate, and some humans will do anything to preserve its value. Bodacious "Bo" Benitez wants to disrupt the system by smuggling cacao plants offworld, but doing so brings her face-to-face with her alien boyfriend's hidden past, the man who murdered her chocolate-smuggling father, and the possibility of global war. The story is languidly paced and occasionally feels too drawn out, but Royer keeps things interesting by portraying how one tiny encounter can quickly spiral out of control in an interconnected galaxy. The aliens aren't out to conquer Earth, just the markets, and they ruthlessly wield economics and niceties instead of lasers, to darkly comic and sometimes deadly serious effect. Trade-related science fiction is a small but solid niche, and Royer's work fills it nicely.

Other Reviews:

"Free Chocolate is quirky, fun, and loaded with sci-fi chocolaty goodness! This book is a calorie-free treat." – Beth Cato, author of *Breath of Earth*

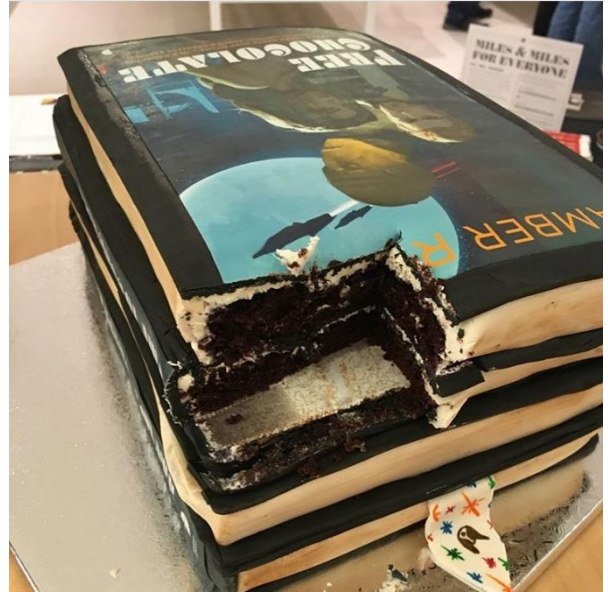
"Exhilarating fun in a galaxy muy loca for Earth's most sublime delicacy! Bodacious lives up to her name, and not even certain death can slow her down. Free Chocolate proves that romance, intrigue, space opera, mortal peril, and culinary ambition can be served with a sweet side dish of humor." – Sue Burke, author of *Semiosis*

"You had me at laser monkey robots." – Arianne "Tex" Thompson, author of the *Children of the Drought* trilogy

"Soap opera drama mixed with sci-fi high stakes, Free Chocolate is a muy thrilling ride!" – Laura Maisano, author of *Cosplayed* and *Schism*

“Earth has a monopoly on chocolate. The aliens will do anything to get a cacao sample, and the planetary government will do anything to stop them. What a premise!” – Daniel M Benson, author of Groom of the Tyrannosaur Queen

“¡Muy deliciosa! Amber Royer’s Free Chocolate is nonstop fun on every page! From strangely delicious sounding cosmic treats to Spanglish-speaking intergalactic diplomats to the relentlessly breathtaking featastic adventure, this is a unique read and a total page-turner! Not only does Royer introduce the first university-student Mexican sci-fi heroine, with a host of wildly eclectic friends, but she builds a believable universe around them that is a true delight to visit. Can’t wait for the next adventure!” – Eden Unger Bowdich, author of the Young Inventors Guild Series



“Free Chocolate is an absolutely bodacious debut for author Amber Royer, and a uniquely entertaining treat for readers! Part sci-fi space romp, part political thriller, and part sweet romance, this book fulfils every literary craving.” – Diane Kelley, author of the Tara Holloway series and the Paw Enforcement series

“The world building is unique, the pace frenetic and the story fantastically inventive.” – Worthless Chat Monkeys

“Free Chocolate is a fun, mile-a-minute read that goes by quickly and easily, mixing action and romance in equal and entertaining measure.” – Occasionally Random Book Reviews

Amber's Articles Related To The Chocoverse:

Opera, Space Opera and Soap Opera -- Posted on the Barnes and Noble SFF Blog as part of the sale announcement -- <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-fi-fantasy/interstellar-chocolate-war-announcing-free-chocolate-amber-royer/>)

Humor in Science Fiction -- Posted as part of the cover reveal on Unbound Worlds -- <http://www.unboundworlds.com/2018/04/exclusive-cover-reveal-amber-royers-debut-space-opera-free-chocolate/>

Research and Empathy -- <https://scifichick.com/guest-post-author-amber-royer/2019/03/15/>

Related Non-Fiction Titles:

Royer, Amber and Jacob. There are Herbs in My Chocolate. Golden Tip Press. 2019. Cookbook pairing chocolate and culinary herbs.