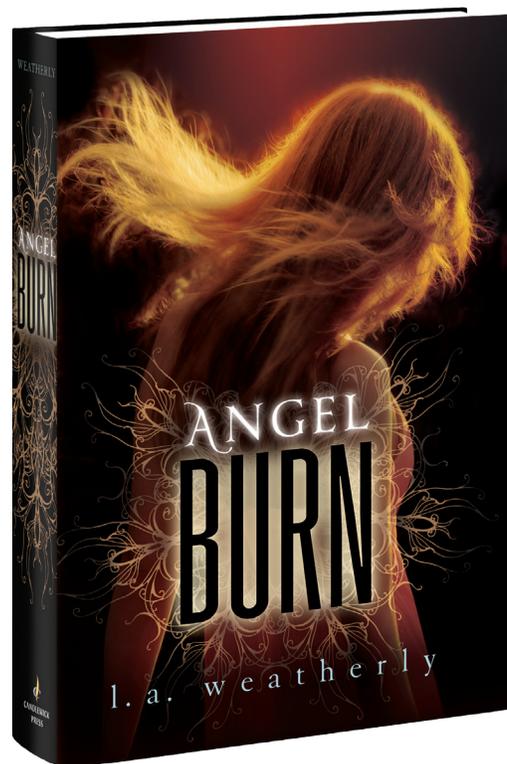


Q & A with
L. A. Weatherly
author of
**ANGEL
BURN**



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Also available in audio

Your depiction of angels is interesting and unusual. Where did the idea come from?

I was standing in a bookstore one day, looking at all the nonfiction books about angels, and I suddenly thought, what if angels aren't what they seem? What if they have their own agenda, and are actually beings to be feared instead of admired? *Angel Burn* happened very quickly after that!

Can you introduce us to your main characters, Alex and Willow, and tell us a little about what happens to them in the book?

The premise of the book is that angels, far from being benign and compassionate beings, are actually alien creatures who are preying on humanity. Alex is a seventeen-year-old Angel Killer, part of a covert CIA group and one of the few people who knows the truth about angels in our world. He's been trained from childhood to hunt down and kill angels.

Willow is a sixteen-year-old psychic misfit, thought of as "Queen Weird" by her peers in the small New York town where she's from. Unbeknownst to her, she's actually half angel, and she might be the key to destroying the angels once and for all.

When Alex is ordered to kill Willow, he realizes that all is not what it seems. An epic road trip follows, where they must somehow avoid being killed while they try to work out why the angels want Willow dead. Along the way, the hunter and the hunted find themselves falling in love.



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Other than Willow and Alex, who do you think is the most interesting character (hero or villain) in the book, and what is it about this character that intrigues you?

I love Jonah as a character. He sees himself as being spineless, but he actually has the moral courage to pursue questions even when he doesn't want to know the answers, and then to take action. I find him especially intriguing because (minor spoiler alert!) he was actually meant to die at the end of book 1. He completely refused to, and (another minor spoiler alert!) is now in both books 2 and 3, becoming a fairly major character as the series goes on. He has a really interesting story arc ahead of him, and I'm very glad that he insisted on sticking around.

Can you tell us more about Alex and Willow's road trip? Is it inspired by a personal experience? Which stop was your favorite?

When the story first came to me, I just sort of knew, instantly, that Willow was from upstate New York and that Alex was from New Mexico, and that a lot of the book was going to be a journey from one place to the other. Although I've traveled a fair amount in the United States, that particular journey wasn't one that I had done before I wrote *Angel Burn*—though I did do it earlier this year, retracing Alex and Willow's route as part of my research. I LOVED the panhandle of Texas, which they pass through. I didn't expect to—all I had ever heard about it was that it's hot and flat—but it turned out to be the most amazing countryside: so incredibly flat that you get these sweeping expanses where you can literally see for miles, out to the unbroken line of the horizon. There was something really hypnotic about it; it felt so pure and peaceful. I also loved New Mexico, where Alex is from. We spent several days there, and it's such rugged countryside—this incredible mix of mountains and desert.



Photo by Niall McDiarmid

Can you share a few words about your writing process? What is the most rewarding aspect of writing for you?

I'm pretty disciplined and try to write a certain number of words per day. I can also get very obsessed when I'm working on a big project and am prone to writing at strange hours of the night. I love writing at three in the morning, for instance, when the world is asleep and there are no distractions at all.

The most rewarding aspect of writing for me is when my characters take life and say and do things that I didn't expect, but which are just so right: much better than anything I could have planned. The same thing happens with storylines sometimes, where threads weave themselves together in perfect ways I couldn't have predicted. When it's going well, there's definitely a sort of magic to writing. (Let's not talk about when it doesn't go well!)

Do you listen to music while you write?

I often listen to music while I write, usually pieces that won't distract me while I try to focus, such as lyrics in a different language or music that is purely instrumental. I think of it as soundtrack music, and especially love pieces that help me visualize what I'm writing, as if I'm seeing it up on the big screen!

When I wrote the first draft of *Angel Burn*, I listened over and over to *Cantamus Aurora* by Sarah Class. The album has an angelic feel in places, but also a dark sense of drama and power. I could just see the angels flying in, and hear Alex shouting Willow's name.

When you close your eyes and imagine your readers, who do you see?

Probably myself when I was younger (or even myself now). I try to write the stories that I myself would love to read, and just hope that other people will enjoy them, too.

Why do you think people are so attracted to the paranormal at present? Is this specifically a young adult phenomenon?

I don't think it's entirely a new thing. For instance, Anne Rice was huge when I was a teenager. Although a lot of adults are very into it as well, I do feel this genre speaks easily to teenagers, with its themes of alienation and the "other" within us that we don't quite understand. And of course there's also the appeal of something a bit forbidden and unknown.

Do you plan your stories in great detail before you begin to write? Did you know how the third book was going to end before you began to write *Angel Burn*?

Yes, I do plan a lot, though with longer novels it doesn't always help; they have a way of taking on a life of their own. But yes, I've known from an early stage how the trilogy is going to end, and can hardly wait to write it. It's going to be very sad, but hopefully really lovely, too.

Who were your favorite authors when you were a child?

I loved reading both fantasy and realistic fiction, and some of my favorites included Lloyd Alexander, S. E. Hinton, C. S. Lewis, Tove Jansson, Barbara Wersba, and Norma Klein.

When did you know that you wanted to write?

I've literally almost always known. One of my earliest memories is of sitting at the little desk that I had in my bedroom, writing and illustrating a story. I was very serious about it; I was determined that it was going to get published! I was lucky in that both of my parents loved to read and read aloud to me from an early age, so I suppose it was only natural that creating my own stories was something I wanted to do.

You grew up in America, but now live in England. What do you miss most about America, and what do you love most about England?

Ooh, good question! The things I miss most about America tend to be just silly little things: being able to order iced tea in a restaurant; seeing fireflies at night in the summertime; enjoying lots of bright, hot sunny days (I grew up in the South). And what I love most about England is just that it's my home now. Plus I love the countryside (and here in Hampshire we really have some gorgeous spots) and the people with their wry sense of humor.

Why did you choose to combine the first-person and third-person points of view for the narrative instead of using just one of them?

It wasn't really a conscious choice. It's just that I heard both characters so strongly in my mind that I knew right from the start that I wanted to let them both speak. And I do think that the story benefits from it; if we only had Willow's viewpoint, we'd miss out on a great deal of the tension that we get from hearing Alex's point of view, too, as he has a very different slant on things than she does. Interestingly, although I think I could probably write Willow's voice in the third person, I doubt that I could write Alex's in the first. I have no idea why; it's just how I hear him! This sort of thing just happens sometimes. Who knows why.

Can you share with us your plan for the second book in the trilogy?

I am almost insanely secretive when it comes to works in progress, so I won't say very much. What I will say is that it's going to have an urban setting, and that we'll see a lot of the characters from *Angel Burn* (including Alex and Willow, naturally) along with some new ones. And both Alex and Willow are going to be tested in ways that they never expected, which will also test their love for each other. It's going to have some really tense, exciting moments, as well as the continuing romance, of course.



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