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The best fantasy books that taught me how to write funny (funny fiction, that is)



By Randee Dawn



Who am I?

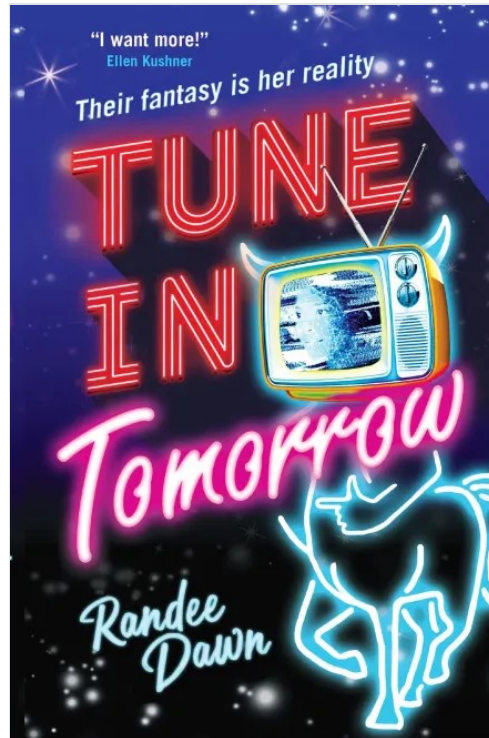
I've steeped myself in the world of entertainment journalism since high school—writing music reviews, interviewing musicians, hanging out with actors, wandering backstage on shows as varied as *Law & Order* and *Another World*—and it was time to do what everyone says authors should do: *Write what you know*. I have a great admiration (and some criticism) for soaps and reality TV shows, but I recognize the ways in which they appeal to us like no other entertainment—they get us involved. They make us want to be part of the story, and the best ones convince us (especially those reality TV shows) that we are part of their incredible worlds.

I wrote...

Tune in Tomorrow: The Curious, Calamitous,

Cockamamie Story of Starr Weatherby and the Greatest Mythic Reality Show Ever

By Randee Dawn



What is my book about?

Starr's a small town girl with mythic-sized dreams of becoming, well, a star. After years of struggle, she lands a role on a show no one's ever heard of: *Tune In Tomorrow*, a "reality" TV series made by mythical creatures, for mythical creatures—but starring humans. She quickly shifts from astounded newcomer to rising fan favorite, but encounters the show's dark underbelly: *Tune* is crumbling from within due to plummeting viewership, there's a veteran diva who holds its future in her grip—and Starr's predecessor vanished under mysterious circumstances! The rookie vows to do whatever it takes to keep her dream gig, though... even if it brings down the show in the process.

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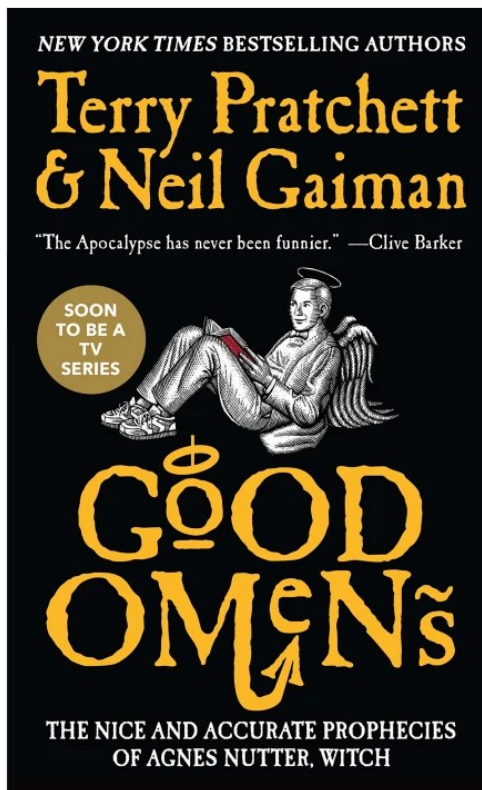
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The books I picked & why

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Good Omens

By Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman



Why this book?

I was a latecomer to reading Pratchett and didn't leap on *Omens* until I heard there was about to be a TV adaptation. But holy heck, what I was missing! What's delightful about *Omens* is how it weaves off-the-wall characters with serious themes and then tosses in a generous dollop of unique British silliness that can range from bone dry to eccentric. Basically, the Antichrist has come to the world and been baby-swapped, and it's up to an angel and a demon to decide whether to help usher in the End Times. Then the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse show up. Quirky and cool and snicker-worthy, this book helped free my mind to write my own book

(which has its own very long sub-title, at least in partial homage).

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The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

By Douglas Adams



Why this book?

Hitchhiker's isn't strict fantasy. It mostly takes place in space! Among spaceships! And aliens! But c'mon, this is as much fantasy as *Doctor Who*, and as for the silly factor—what's more fantastical than bad Vagon poetry? In essence, Ford is saved by his pal (and alien) Arthur from an apocalypse, and they then carom around space meeting any number of incredible, surreal creatures. *Hitchhikers* first came to me as a text-based game that helped rewire my brain: The "logic" was entirely internal (towels

will save your life in Adams' universe) and the author had clearly decided he could do *anything at any time*. That freewheeling storytelling led me to approach every scene I wrote with the idea of, "What would make this funnier?"

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The Princess Bride: S. Morgenstern's Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure

By William Goldman



Why this book?

There is nothing that *The Princess Bride* doesn't have. It's an adventure, a romance, a horror (remember *The Machine*, which literally sucks the life out of you?) and a story that lovingly skewers all of the tropes and

expectations we have of High Fantasy. And it also has an extended title! I also love the way the book version is told: Goldman suggests it was originally written by S. Morgenstern, and was actually a political satire—and Goldman's bold enough to put in a fictionalized version of *himself*. That audacity feeds into what I was trying to do with my book—create a show that's both a satire and an homage to a dying genre, but also make it an adventure all on its own. Goldman showed me the way.

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Funny Fantasy

By Alex Shvartsman, Gail Carriger + 7 more ▾



Why this book?

Shvartsman has been compiling anthologies of funny fantasy and science

fiction since 2012; he's just recently launched a Kickstarter for *Unidentified Funny Objects No. 9*. He picks wonderful stories from an array of genre authors, which always leads to a great experience for readers. This particular book is a compilation of fourteen of his best (at least, so far). I have a warm spot for these stories, not just because they make me laugh, but they show a wide variety of the types of comedy that can work on a page, and as such are a primer in how to do it right. I did submit a story to Shvartsman once and he gave me *such* generous feedback it made me want to work harder. And funnier.

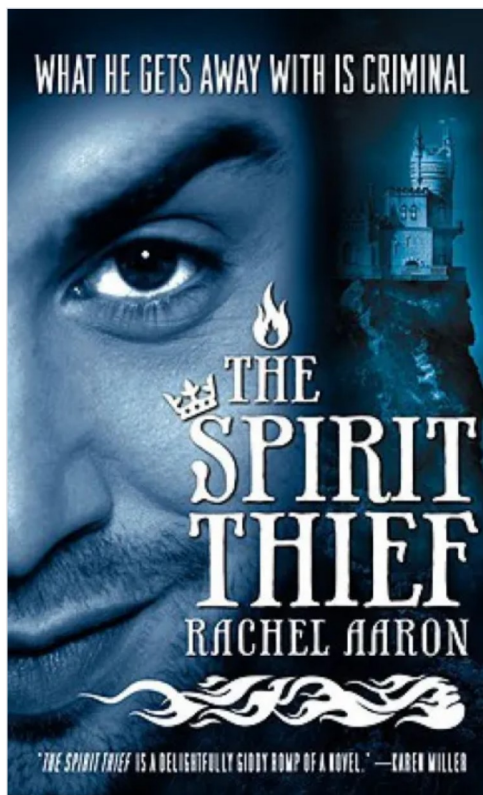
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The Spirit Thief

By Rachel Aaron



Why this book?

I have a soft spot for charming con men, and in *Spirit Thief* we meet one of the best. Not only is Eli Monpress a wizard, he's the greatest thief ever.

Thief is just the first in a series of Eli Monpress/Spirit novels, and I've only read the first one thus far. But it's a light-as-air confection that manages to unspool one single caper over the course of a full novel while still keeping things fast-paced, with an ensemble of colorful, fully-realized characters.

Aaron manages a balancing act with this kind of character that I'm still working on mastering.

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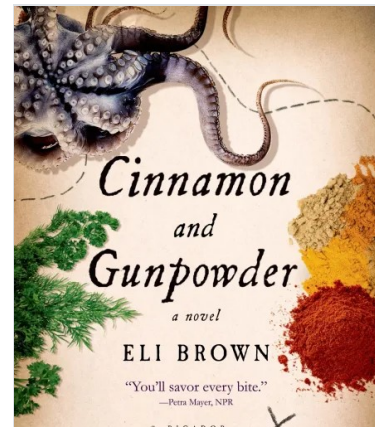
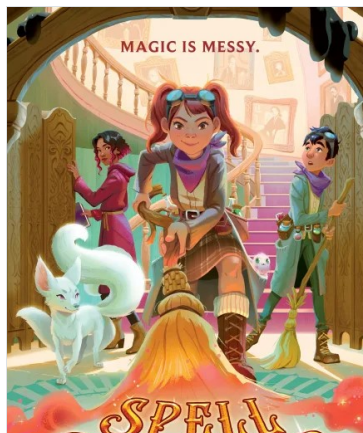
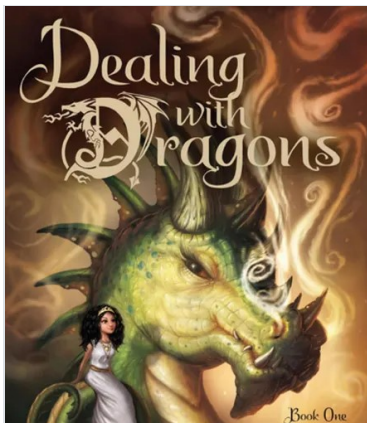
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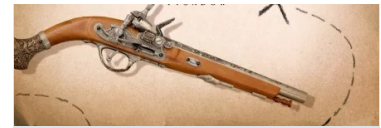
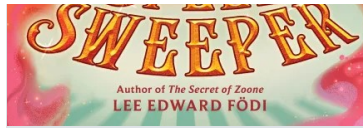
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