



In conversation with
TRUNG LE NGUYEN,
creator of
Angelica
and the **BEAR PRINCE**

Angelica was the girl who could do it all until burnout hit. Have you ever felt burned-out? What did you do to combat it?

I sure have! And my burnout strategy always depends. If it comes from being worn out creatively, I like to take a step back and receive art. It's nice to look to others who are energized about their creativity. It's infectious! But burnout is such a slow, agonizing simmer. It's a long game with combating burnout, and I try to give myself space to just be a little whiny before resuming the fight to reclaim my energy and enthusiasm.

Much of the story takes place at the local theater. Were you a theater kid growing up?

I was! I loved tech crew. Growing up I helped my dad build and install cabinets, so I was comfortable with carpentry, and I loved to paint and build sets. I liked performing, too, but I quickly learned that I prefer to work alone when it comes to some of my creative outlets—hence why I both write and draw my own graphic novels, I guess—so I did speech team instead, on the side.

You are both the author and the illustrator of this graphic novel. What comes first, the words or the illustrations? Or do you work on both simultaneously?

It's different for every writer-artist, but for me the words tend to come first because that's how I best organize my thoughts. They're the scaffolding around which I can build my story. Drawing a book takes an enormous amount of work, so having the words settled helps me feel confident about how to compose a page. I don't even know what a character will look like until I have a story and start drawing the character based on established vibes.

Angelica and the Bear Prince is a mix of charming contemporary romance with a dash of fairy tale. Do you have a favorite fairy tale?

My favorite fairy tale changes all the time. *Angelica and the Bear Prince* is a goofy pastiche of "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," which I love. I am currently very into the Italian variant of Bluebeard, which is about the Devil disguised as a man with a silver nose marrying three sisters, the youngest of whom tricks him into setting all her sisters free. It's a very fun little story.



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