

in conversation with **SOMAN CHAINANI,** author of **YOUNG WORLD**



Katie Grammes



After the success of the School for Good and Evil series, you're leaving fairy tales behind with *Young World*. What inspired you to make the genre switch and write this story?

Readers know me as the Fairy Tale Guy. But even though romantasy and fairy tales continue to be in demand, I sensed audiences wanted something else. Just as a

decade ago I anticipated middle-grade readers were craving romance with their fantasy, I think young adults are now craving a fantasy that empowers them *for real*. Somewhere inside, readers yearn not to keep living in other worlds but to transform *this* one. To make this world as rich and wondrous as the fantasy ones they escape to. To take all their mounting anxieties and turn them into power. But what would happen if they had this power? If teenagers *actually* had the chance to run the world? That's the question that brought *Young World* to life.

Variety called *Young World* “House of Cards meets Hunger Games.” How would you classify it?

I've heard that description from multiple people who've read it. And it's compelling because it highlights just how unusual *Young World* is. First, because it crosses so many genres: it's a romantic, geopolitical action-murder-mystery thriller. But also because of its form. It has over 150 two-color visuals that are part of the story—an immersive diary with these neon-bright easter eggs and clues to the larger mystery. Imagine *The Da Vinci Code* told not just in prose but in brilliant graphics and design. *Young World* is the closest you'll come to reading a movie or experiencing a novel that activates multiple senses at once.

As you noted, *Young World* features more than 150 graphics and illustrations throughout the text. What made you want to incorporate so many visuals in the story? How do you think this enhances the reading experience?

The theme of the book is urgency. The notion that the world is spinning further and further away from the control of young people—even though young people are going to be the ones to inherit our mess. So I needed a book that would feel like an anthem to youth and could capture even the most reluctant reader. Unlike my other books, which are quite literary, *Young World* had to be a rip-roarer that worked for everyone. The visuals, then, are part of that experience. It lets me tell twice the story at twice the speed. *Young World* is a big book, a truly epic story. But told in a way that will let readers of any age tear through it *fast*. And hopefully reread it again and again for all the clues they missed.

In *Young World*, high school senior Benton Young is elected President of the United States, which inspires young people around the globe to ascend to positions of power. What message do you hope young readers will take away from seeing themselves portrayed as world leaders?

Young people have the numbers and voting power to wrest control of their future. That is a clear message of *Young World*. That they can't depend on the older generations to do what's right for them. They need to stand up, band together, and act as their own party. With their numbers and energy . . . they will succeed. But the takeaway of the book is even bigger than that. It's a reminder that young people are the moral conscience of this world. They have the energy, the optimism, the capability to do impossible things. To make this future more human and hopeful for all of us. We need them to stand up. To believe in themselves. *Young World* aims to light that fire.



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