

[Enter upbeat music that fades]

Sabrina: Hi friends! Welcome back to LitTea! I'm your host, Sabrina Lotfi, and my special guest today is Amanda DeWitt, author of the young adult novel *Aces Wild: A Heist*, which comes out September 13<sup>th</sup>.

So, let's jump right in!

[Upbeat music ends.]

Sabrina: Hi.

Amanda: Hey.

Sabrina: You ready?

Amanda: As I'll ever be?

Sabrina: Do you have your babies with you?

Amanda: No, because my babies are very loud, so they are kicked out.

Sabrina: I have only the dog with me. She's usually pretty quiet. She's been good during the interviews. When I try and record the intros by myself, she'll just lay here and lick.

Amanda: Oh, no....

Sabrina: And it doesn't pick up on my thing, but I can hear it.

Amanda: It's distracting.

Sabrina: But yeah, she's usually pretty good through these. She's got her muffin, which she'll just lay with...

Amanda: One of my dogs. I don't think she likes it when I do zoom stuff because I think to her, she gets nervous and leaves and I think she thinks I'm talking to myself. [Laughs.] I'm like, 'It's fine. It's fine.'

Sabrina: That's so funny. You're like, 'No, we're having a real conversation here. Really.'

Amanda: There's someone in here, I promise.

Sabrina: Yeah, exactly. Okay. So, what book made you a reader?

Amanda: That's a good question. I guess it wasn't a specific one that made me a reader. It is funny, I have been able to trace certain pieces of my reading and writing back to certain books. Like, the *Artemis Fowl* series was a big favorite of mine as a kid, and reading it, I'm like, 'Oh, this is where my sense of humor came from.' Or the *Bartimaeus Trilogy* by Jonathan Stroud. I'm like, 'Oh yeah, that's where the kinda goofy humor comes from.' But it's my favorites. But...

Sabrina: Nice. And you said it's for a writer, as well, with those?

Amanda: Yeah, I definitely see a lot of in *Aces Wild*, Jack. I can kinda see a line between him and then, through the decades to *Artemis Fowl*. I'm like, 'Okay, they're my favorite types of characters.'

Sabrina: Oh, I haven't done *Artemis Fowl* in forever.

Amanda: They're still good. I reread them a couple of years ago and I was like, 'These are still good, actually.'

Sabrina: Nice. Okay, I'm gonna have to do a reread. So, when and how did you get into writing?

Amanda: I mean, I guess, technically, I got into writing, you know, for fun. RPin *Warrior Cats* on Neopets, back when I was like eleven or twelve, and that all kinda snowballed from there. But, I guess that was the first, outside of school, that sort of thing.

Sabrina: That's so cute. I've heard a couple of people say that, and I never, I do remember Neopets. I never found a writing community for Neopets though, and I'm really disappointed in Past Me about this.

Amanda: Yeah, you had to go to the RP boards. That's where it was happening. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: Okay, so share some hobbies and interests outside of writing. And of course, tell us more about your pets.

Amanda: So, outside of writing, I'm a public librarian, so writing and that, kinda sell books all the time. Outside of that, I do art. I like painting. I also play Dungeons and Dragons with my friends, so that's kinda fun. You get the creativity thing outside of the - I mean, since the book deal and stuff. And like, okay, writing went from aspiration to like, 'Okay, it's work now.' I kinda made those hobbies more important. I enjoy art, but I don't want to be like, quote, unquote, an artist because I'm like, 'This is my hobby. This is what I do for fun. And that's it.'

Sabrina: No, that makes sense.

Amanda: Yeah, that sounds cool, With D&D too, you get the creativity, but...

Sabrina: I love that. How big is your group of friends that you play with?

Amanda: So, our group, we have - we have about six let's see, hold on, I've got to count them. So, including me, there's six in our group, but with schedules and stuff, like, we started out as a D&D group, sort of, but now we're just like friends. And the people who play now, it's usually about four of us. Just the way schedules work and being able to actually get together. So, one DM and three players.

Sabrina: Nice. What's your character? Will you tell me?

Amanda: So, okay, my friends make fun of me because, despite having played for multiple years, like six plus years, I am dedicated to not knowing the rules, not using my spells.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh. Okay, keep going.

Amanda: The character I usually play is a Bard, but I multi-class as a Warlock. So sometimes I use my spells, but they're always like, 'Hey, are you ever gonna use Bardic inspiration?', and I'm like, 'Oh, I forgot. Sorry, guys. No, I'm not gonna use it, actually.' So, I'm the chaotic one of the group. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: I love it. Okay, what about your pets?

Amanda: So, I have two dogs, one cat and six chickens.

Sabrina: Chickens? Those are so cute.

Amanda: Yeah, the interesting thing about all of them is that - by coincidence - they all are all mostly black. Two of them are entirely black, and even the chickens are black with, like, red chests and some like, I don't know what happened, I don't know why I have all these goth animals, but at least all of the hair is the same color. So, as long as I wear black, you can't tell that there's dog hair all over it. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: Okay, you want to get into some querying and publishing questions?

Amanda: All right!

Sabrina: Take us through your querying journey and your path to finding an agent and then any stats or whatever you're comfortable sharing.

Amanda: Yeah, so my querying journey – so, I queried my first book in 2015. So, that was a while ago and that was... So before then, I had started a bunch of things but not finished anything. So, after I graduated college, the beginning of 2015, I was finally like, 'Okay, you know what? I'm just gonna finish something. I'm gonna pick something, and I'm gonna finish it.' And I queried it. That one got one full request. Obviously didn't go anywhere. It was a YA paranormal. So, looking back, I'm like, okay...

Sabrina: Nice.

Amanda: Like werewolves and vampires. And again, this was 2015, so it was like, that's not gonna go anywhere. I'm like. 'You know what? I'm okay with that. That one was not it.'

Sabrina: Totally, I wrote a Dystopian right after Hunger Games.

Amanda: You're just like, 'What was I thinking?' I was so young and optimistic then.

Sabrina: I mean, hey, it inspired you. Whatever.

Amanda: It doesn't matter.

Sabrina: Yeah. I love vampire books, for the record.

Amanda: I know!

Sabrina: I've been really excited. There've been some really interesting ones coming out recently. You might need to dust that off.

Amanda: Not this one. It is cool seeing that kinda, like, that genre rehabilitate a little bit. We're finally starting to - because I like them. I'm like, I want to read them. Yeah, that one, it was the first book, so it was a learning experience.

Sabrina: We have to have those.

Amanda: Yeah, exactly. I still love it, but no one else needs to.

Sabrina: We all have those. Yes. I'm the same with that Dystopia.

Amanda: Yeah. I think it's important to the process. You know?

Sabrina: You do. You have to be able to let, I think you have to fully let go of something.

Amanda: Yeah. It's like learning how to be rejected, I guess, is a good lesson because there's a lot of it...

Sabrina: On all levels.

Amanda: Yeah. Okay. This will never end. And, like, learning to let people read your stuff and not, like, freak out. So that one was...2015. After that, I did book two. That was 2016, 2017. That one was a contemporary fantasy, but that one, I know that one got some interest. No bites, obviously, but it was kinda moving in the right direction. And then 2017, I had a YA fantasy. That one actually got two offers. So, I've had two agents. This was the

first one, obviously. And yes, that one had two offers. So that was kinda like, 'Whoa...'

Sabrina: Decision time.

Amanda: Yeah. I have to choose. And I picked an agent. And it was like, w 'Well, this is crazy.' That one went on submission. Let's see, spring 2018. Died on submission by fall. And then that agent left the business the next spring, in 2019.

Sabrina: Oh, no. And then you're like, 'Oh, I get to do this again.'

Amanda: Yeah. Like, 'Okay, we're back.' Which, I don't know, I was weirdly optimistic at the time. At the time, I was like, 'Oh, I did it once, I can do it again.' Which is true. But it took longer than I was kinda, like, expecting. But that one. So, after that, it was kinda interesting. A little unusual because I had written another YA fantasy while book three was on sub. That one, I revised it a little bit with that agent, but then she left the business. So that one I queried. That one I actually... So, a friend of mine who we shared the first agent, but she - I think she split with her before the agent left the business. And so, she had a whole journey, but she ended up with a different agent. So, she actually got that fantasy put in front of my current agent, Cate, who is her agent as well. So, I got a little bit of a back door there. So her, she actually sent me a Revise and Resubmit for that one.

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: So, I rewrote that entire thing. It was third person YA fantasy. I rewrote it all in first person.

Sabrina: Oh my gosh. How long did that take?

Amanda: Not as long as... I think. Well, because at first, I was like, 'No, this isn't worth it. It's too much.' And I was like, 'Okay, well, no, I'm gonna do it.' And it took, I don't know, maybe two or three months.

Sabrina: Okay, that's really not that bad, actually. That's really good.

Amanda: Yeah, it wasn't as bad as I was expecting. And afterwards I was like, 'Okay, now this was good. This was a good decision.' Maybe that's what I had to tell myself, I don't know. But that one. So, I submitted that one again. So, book five was *Aces Wild* and that I wrote in - like, it all blurs together. I think it was like 2018, 2019. I wrote it after the second YA fantasy because I was like, 'Can I do contemporary? Maybe? Let's try.' Yeah, all the time I was like, 'I don't know how,' but the YA fantasy market is so hard. I was like, 'Well, let's kinda see what happens. Let's kinda spread our chances out here.' So that one. I queried *Aces Wild* fall 2019. And I got a lot, or not a lot, but quite a few full requests on that one, but no bites. So, I did find some statistics for that one. I don't know how many I left off, cause I was feeling lazy that day. But on my chart, I had 43 queries, ten full requests, which felt pretty good. It seemed there was a lot of interest in it.

Sabrina: That's a good number. I mean, honestly, especially today.

Amanda: Yeah, well, so it was before the pandemic, so it was probably a little bit kinder. And that one. So, I had actually kinda given up on that one. I was actually gonna rewrite it at one point, but it was, so I'd sent those out in fall 2019, a little bit into 2020. But summer of 2020, not to get into it, but my life - some bad things happened in the family, like family emergencies. And I was like, 'You know what?' And also, there's a global pandemic. I was like, 'You know what, I'm just gonna take the rest of this year. I'm not gonna worry about it. We'll figure it out next year.' And the next month, in July, I got an offer on like a month's old full request for *Aces Wild*. And I was like, 'Oh, okay, never mind. I guess we are doing this.'

Sabrina: I love it. I love when you're just like, 'I'm just not gonna think about it right now. And you're like, 'Oh! Oh, this is still happening. Okay.'

Amanda: Yeah, okay, I guess we are gonna think about it. So, I made a decision, and fate was like, 'No, you're not doing that.' That agent offered and so I notified the other agents and Cate who had my fantasy. I was like, 'Hey, I got an offer on this one if you want to read it.' She read it in one day, and she offered as well. So that's how I kinda ended up with her.

Sabrina: Nice. That's so awesome.

Amanda: There was a couple of twists and turns.

Sabrina: Yeah. So, what was your call like with each of them? Is that how you decided?

Amanda: Yeah, so how I decided, so, it kinda - obviously, having an agent and having her leave and that book die in submission, it wasn't like, great, but it helped me kinda learn what I wanted. I have an agent like what I was looking for, because one of the things that made me pick Cate was on the call -- because she knew I wrote fantasy as well, she was already kinda thinking about where my career is gonna go.

Sabrina: Oh, good.

Amanda: Like, she was like, thinking about, yeah, here are some contemporary authors that also do fantasy now, like, where we can take this. So, yeah, I was really won over by the fact that she was thinking, like, long term, and how can we make all of this work? And also, one of my friends was also her client. So, I talked to her. I was like, 'Do you like her? What's your read?' And she said to me, she was like, 'This is a weird thing to say, but Cate is motivated to sell books.' And I was like, 'Yeah, that's actually what I want in an agent.' It's weird that you think they wouldn't all be, but because the first one, it was, I don't know. It took a really long time to get on submission, and this is again, before COVID. I don't know. And communication was kinda difficult. So, with the second agent, I knew I wanted someone motivated, someone who was communicating, like, someone who wanted to get it out on sub, and get it out there and see what happens. And with Cate, it's been great. She's been perfect, and so I'm happy. It was a success story.

Sabrina: Yay! So how did going on sub with her work? Did you do revisions first, and what were those like?

Amanda: Yeah, and that was something with the other agent, too. Not my first agent, but the two I was choosing between for *Aces Wild*.



Amanda: The agent who offered first, she didn't really have any revisions she wanted to do. And I was kinda like, 'I mean, I like the book, but I know it's not perfect.' So, I liked that Cate already had ideas, like, 'Okay, how can we improve this?' So, I was like, 'I know I need direction.' And so, we did - I think we did one round of revisions, maybe like one and a half. It wasn't anything super intense. It wasn't a whole rewrite like the other one, but it was --because it is a heist. So, there's a little bit of -- there was a lot of tightening we did. So, I signed with her. Let's see. I think the offer was in July. I think I signed in August, and I think we were on submission by September.

Sabrina: Okay. So yeah, that's actually pretty quick.

Amanda: Yeah, it was pretty quick.

Sabrina: Especially with her doing reads in between, I think. It sounded like if you had multiple rounds.

Amanda: And luckily *Aces Wild*, it's a pretty quick read, so I think that probably helped.

Sabrina: I mean, heist book, it sounds like it should be.

Amanda: Yeah, it's adventure - adventure comedy.

Sabrina: Yes!

Amanda: But my first book that went on submission, the fantasy, that one took seven months to go on submission. I was like, 'Whoa, one month? Okay, I'm ready.'

Sabrina: Yeah, that's really quick.

Amanda: Yeah. We went in September, and then I got the offer from Peachtree Teen in April. So, we had I think she had sent out two rounds of submissions.

Sabrina: Okay. How long did it take before you were allowed to announce it and got the contract and everything signed? Because those are usually the long parts.

Amanda: Yeah. So, I think it was the end of April. I got the call about it, and we didn't announce it until July. So, it was to the point where with querying, you kinda learn not to get your hopes up too high. You moderate your expectations. So, here I'd gotten the call, but I hadn't signed any paperwork yet. So, I told some people, but I hadn't told my family yet because I was like, 'Well, let's just wait and see how this goes.'

Sabrina: Sign the papers. Sign the papers. I know my brain does the same thing.

Amanda: Yeah. I was like, 'Okay, it's in writing. Now it's real.' [Laughs.] Stuck with me.

Sabrina: I love it! Okay, so after you got to announce and everything, you signed all the paperwork and everything, was there anything weird or interesting in your contract that you were like, 'This is a thing that they negotiate?'

Amanda: Yeah, contract. I'm like, 'It's my agent's time to read that.'

Sabrina: Nice.

Amanda: Just kidding.

Sabrina: I mean, it is, though.

Amanda: I don't think there was anything shocking, necessarily. I guess it was kinda surprising, as just like a first-time author seeing all the legalese and the different audio and movie rights and merchandising rights. I'm like, 'Whoa, okay.'

Sabrina: Yeah, they do. They put all that stuff in there really early. I think that's really cool.

Amanda: Yeah. Just in case. I remember the first one because Cate was going over it with me, and she was like, 'Yeah, there's a thing about graphic novels, but we let them keep the rights because most books don't end up graphic novels.' And I was like, 'Yeah, I can't imagine. I'm not expecting that.'

Sabrina: *Aces Wild*, graphic novel. I am here for this.

Amanda: I'd be okay with it. What was funny is I remember when we read the contract about the advance and stuff, which wasn't super big, and I was like, 'Oh, well, yeah. I mean, if it earns out. I don't even know.' And then, I know with my audiobook sale, it actually has already earned out.

Sabrina: Oh, wow, that's cool.

Amanda: Yes. It wasn't a big advance, but still, I was like, 'Oh, wow.'

Sabrina: Hey, that's awesome, though. That's what you want to hear before you're even out yet?

Amanda: Yeah, I was like, 'I didn't know that's possible. Cool.'

Sabrina: That's super cool. So, once you signed everything, and then you got to announce, and then you got... What kinda revisions did you do after that?

Amanda: So, with Ashley, my editor, we did two rounds of revision. It might have been more like one and a half. It was kinda funny with those revisions because I'm usually pretty good -- I've been told -- at not overdoing it, because sometimes you get a note and you're like, you kinda want to try too hard to fix it, and it's like, 'Oh, no, pullback.' Usually, I'm pretty good at not doing that, but it's your book you're publishing, so I was a little like, okay, so there was one note about the heist that she had for me that I was like, 'Okay, I can do this, I can do this.' And then I sent her the revisions, and she was like, 'Okay, good thinking, but let's scale it back. You don't need all of this extra detail.' And I was like, 'Oh, okay, you're right. I was trying to fix it', but it turned out it was okay.

Sabrina: At that point, I think it's easier to cut stuff that's been written instead of, like, more, more.

Amanda: Yeah, better too much. We'll just get rid of it.

Sabrina: Yeah, I think that's a good way to do it. Just here's all the things. What do you want to keep?

Amanda: Yeah, 'Tell me what you like. I'll get rid of the rest.'

Sabrina: And then how long did those take? And was it scary being on deadline?

Amanda: So, I actually kinda liked it. I'm a little spoiled because I haven't had to do a lot on deadline. My deadline has been pretty generous, so I kinda like a deadline because I'm like, 'Look at me. I have an objective that I have to meet at a certain time.'

Sabrina: I think goals are helpful.

Amanda: Yeah, because when you're querying, you have to set your own deadlines and goals, and someone else needs to hold me responsible. That was nice because it wasn't anything too extensive. I think we added, like, one scene, and everything else was just like, tweaking, and I don't remember how... Usually I think it was about, like, six weeks, maybe.

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: And I turn it around pretty fast. Also, because I'm like, 'Well, what else do I have to do?' So, I think we started revisions before it was announced, so I think probably in June or, like, May. God, that was last year.

Sabrina: Is that, like, when it's done with copy edits as well, or is it pretty soon after that that you did copy edits, or did you wait a while?

Amanda: Copy edits, I believe, were in the spring. Let me check my email. Looks like I got my copy edits in October of last year.

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: And there were – there was, like a proof reader, there was a copy edit, and so that was all fall of last year.

Sabrina: Okay. How exciting was it to see your cover for the first time and everything?

Amanda: It was cool. It's funny. So, I got the cover, I had sketches, but the sketches are pretty minimal for the artists we had, so I got a little bit of input there, but it wasn't like it was a cover. But the

first time I saw the first draft of the cover, I was in the airport, in the TSA line, and I was like, 'Okay, I'm gonna wait until I get through the TSA,' just in case I freak out or something. Which I did. I didn't like having a reaction, but I was just like, 'I wanta look at it so bad. But I have to go walk through a metal detector.'

Sabrina: Yes. Don't take my phone away from me.

Amanda: Yeah. Please. I need it.

Sabrina: And then what's the wait been like?

Amanda: It's been kinda strange, I guess [Laughs], in that ARCs started going out in May, I believe, or it was like mid-April to May, and that was on, like, NetGalley and stuff. And it was a Read Now on NetGalley, so it was like, 'Oh, anyone can just read it.' And so, I had to -- it was a weird adjustment to be like, 'Oh, okay. My book that lives in my Google Docs on my computer actually doesn't anymore.'

Sabrina: Like, people are reading it. Yay!

Amanda: Like, I'd see people mention it, or like, they'd mentioned it to me, and I'd be like, 'How did you get that? I didn't email that to you.'

Sabrina: Oh, that's funny.

Amanda: Yeah, because you're used to having to ask people to read your stuff, and here people are just doing it. I'm like, 'Oh, weird.'

Sabrina: Yeah. You're not there in the middle to know who all's doing it. It's just there.

Amanda: Yeah, I guess that's the weird thing, too, is that because so many, like, mental gymnastics you have to go through to be like, 'Okay, people are reading my book and some people aren't gonna like it, and that's okay.'  
[Laughs.]

Sabrina: Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah, it's weird that before everyone reading your book is either, like, your friend or your critique partner or your agent. And so, it's like they're reading Amanda's book, but here now it's strangers who are just reading, like, a book. Like, how I'll just read a book off the shelf. It's weird.

Sabrina: Yeah, you definitely go from a place of like, 'Everyone who has this is in my corner.'

Amanda: They like me, reasonably. It's a big adjustment, especially now that we're getting close to the release, which I thought it was like... so, the ARCs came out, I was like, 'Okay, I'm adjusting my brain. I'm cool, I'm cool.' It's basically like, it's out already, but now that we're in the last month, I'm like, 'Oh, no, I wasn't.'

Sabrina: You got this! I'm so excited. I've been telling kinda like what we do when we're querying, when we get that offer or whatever. But I've just been telling all my friends, like, 'I'm doing this interview, like, don't tell anyone yet,' and they're like, 'Oh, my God.' All my friends are very excited about your book as well.

Amanda: Thank you.

Sabrina: Yeah, you definitely have some very excited waiting readers who are just as avidly on the edge of their seat as I am.

Amanda: Now I'm like, 'Oh, no, now they're gonna read it'.

Sabrina: They're gonna read it. They are. And they're very excited, too.

Amanda: I can't stop them.

Sabrina: It's just like everybody else in your corner that you sent it to. You sent it, it's out.

Amanda: That's true. You know what? It's too late. Too late to change my mind. Emailed and sent.

Sabrina: It is. But it's your baby. You love it. You do. This is the scary part because I'm sure it's extra scary because it's just like, it's coming. There's like that little countdown ticker going on too.

Amanda: Yeah, one month. I'm like, 'That's not a very long time.'

Sabrina: But, I believe in you. This is gonna be awesome.

Amanda: Thank you.

Sabrina: Okay, let's go back to querying and stuff. And, what is your best querying advice in terms of getting your materials ready, but also in terms of mental health?

Amanda: Well, querying is not good for mental health, so that's number one. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: But, it's really bad.

Amanda: So, I guess, this is like, corny advice, and your mileage may vary, but I know with both querying and submission, the best thing for me mentally was working on the next project, which I know it's hard because you're like -- especially when you're querying -- you're like, 'What if this doesn't go anywhere? Like, what if I'm wasting my time, or whatever.' But it just kinda helps me to have that because when you're drafting, you're like, 'Oh, this is exciting, this is fun.' Just to kinda have that to balance out, like, oh, another rejection, or, oh, I'm waiting and waiting and waiting.

Sabrina: It's something else to focus on.

Amanda: Yeah, for sure.

Sabrina: It's not, I mean, you spend so much time in that world with your books, just to step away from that world, I think, is really helpful, probably too.

Amanda: Yeah. I have a little emotional separation, so it doesn't hurt so much.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Amanda: And I know for me and again, both the querying and submission, what kinda drove me where I was like, 'Okay, maybe the one out there right now, maybe it's not the one. But

maybe the one I'm working on right now will be the one.' It's kinda like, I want to have this fallback.

Sabrina: You want it ready to go if you need to pull the one that's out there right now. Yeah, I know. That makes perfect sense.

Amanda: Yeah. It feels like I'm constantly moving forward, which kinda worked out at least, because when *Aces Wild* was on submission, we were getting a lot of rejections from editors based on the gambling, which was kind of weird and surprising because I was like, 'But there's so many books about murder. That's so much worse.' So, during that time, I was like, I was ready, I had mentally given up. I was like, 'Okay, this one isn't it, but let's work on the next one.' And, this one worked out. But then my next book with Peachtree is the book I had written and went on submission. And something that you'll see a lot of debut authors talk about is that book two is really hard.

Sabrina: So, it was nice to probably get it going.

Amanda: Yeah. So, I'm like oh, sweet. Sorry, I haven't done revisions on it yet, but I got the call that Peachtree wanted the next one. And this was in, like, May or I think it was late April again.

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: My deadline was in June. And I was like, 'Oh, okay. Done!'

Sabrina: Oh, nice. Yeah, that is nice. That would have been – Jeez!

Amanda: Yeah, I would have freaked out a little bit if I had to. [Laughs.] Instead, I was like, 'Oh, cool. I did that a year ago.' But yeah, that's definitely that was what helped me and then was like... and it's so hard because I know the querying and the landscape is, like, different now than it was pre-pandemic.

Sabrina: It's real slow.

Amanda: Yeah, I think it was starting to get that way even in... Obviously, the pandemic made it way worse. For *Aces Wild*, like I said, I thought it was, like, closed out, the offer on that one. It was like



six months at least, on the full. And so, I was like, 'Oh, I forgot you had it.'

Sabrina: Yeah, that's a big gap.

Amanda: Yeah, I knew people back in 2014 who got signed super quick.

Sabrina: Yeah, it was a lot quicker. Okay, querying advice for now, while it's a mess out there in the querying trenches, getting your material in the best shape it can be, do you have any advice for that? Because that's all we can do, really, especially in this climate, is put your best foot forward and your best book forward.

Amanda: Yeah, I guess with that with submission materials -- and this is all stuff everyone's said before -- but with the query, for me, it's definitely like it's a pitch. Make it quick and snappy. They don't need to know all the details. And I feel that way with the first pages, too. Not to the same extent, but like, I drive my friends crazy because I'm a very picky reader and I don't have a lot of patience. So usually when I open a book, if I'm gonna love it, I usually love it by the first three pages, sometimes the first paragraph.

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: And you'll kinda notice in my books, too, that they're very quickly paced because I'm like, 'Let's go, let's go, let's go!' Which isn't gonna be every book, but I think having that hook and having something that stands out, because when you're reading so much, I think having something punchy is definitely what's gonna stand out.

Sabrina: Yeah. Something that'll punch you in one direction or another, I think is really good advice. Maybe it's like with a smile or with an 'Oh, no.' I think if things are well written and I want to see where they're going, or I have questions, and then I'm gonna keep going.

Amanda: Yeah. And that's how I am as a reader, too. Within those first pages of that first chapter, where you're wondering what happens next? Or what does XYZ mean? I think having those

hanging questions in the beginning. I've kept reading books that I didn't even like because I was like, 'Okay, I do want to know the answer to this.'

Sabrina: Yeah. Where are we going with this? What can an author expect from their agent?

Amanda: I mean, I guess it kinda depends on what you're looking for, but definitely communication and... oh, I don't know, it's hard to... I guess I can talk about things that I like about my agent.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Amanda: Like communication. What I really like about my agent is that she's supportive, but also realistic. I'll come to her with an idea like, 'Hey, what do you think of this?' And she'll be like, 'X-Y-Z. This is what I see in the market and hear from editors. But, write what you want to write, and we'll look at it and see what we can do.'

Sabrina: Okay.

Amanda: So, it kinda helps to have that, like, because there is the reality of the market and editors and stuff I have in the back of my head, but also be able to do what I want to do and just kinda see where it goes.

Sabrina: Have the freedom to do what you want, while also, what's gonna sell? I mean, there's no point in having an agent, or putting as much edits as we do into it, if it's just for ourselves, really. [Laughs.]

Amanda: Exactly. It's like we're going through all this pain for the goal of being published eventually. So, you do have to have that realistic element.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Amanda: And yeah. Communication. A big thing with me with the second one was doing things in a reasonable time frame because the first sub I went on, like, seven months. The edits we did weren't really that extensive, so the amount of time it took really didn't

feel like -- right. It didn't feel normal. And so, with my second agent, we went really quick, and that was great. It didn't necessarily have to be that quick, but it didn't feel rushed. But it felt like, 'Okay, this is what our goal is. Let's do it.'

Sabrina: Okay, cool.

Amanda: Again, it's a whole different ballgame right now with the COVID.

Sabrina: It is. It's very different. But I think that communication is universal. I think being on the same page as far as what your editorial goals are, and your submission goals are.

Amanda: Yeah, definitely. Like, especially with communication and timeframes, it's all about communication. It's like, okay, if something's gonna take a long time, it's like, let me know. And I think some people are better at it than others, but it's important to me.

Sabrina: Yeah.

Amanda: I guess this is advice as an agented writer, but this is something I work on a lot, where like not to be afraid to ask questions because I definitely do like, 'Oh, I don't want to bother her. It's like, no, it's not a bother. Just ask the question.'

Sabrina: Especially if it's something you need to know.

Amanda: Yeah. Or if it's tormenting you, it's okay.

Sabrina: Yeah. I think it's always okay to ask questions. And honestly, I think for people that it's not okay to ask questions, that says a lot about that person as well. And that's something to be considered, also. Just saying.

Amanda: Yeah, definitely. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: Okay. What about favorite writing tips?

Amanda: I don't know. Writing tips are so hard because everyone does it so differently. I mean, this is corny. All my advice is corny.

Sabrina: I love corn -- and cheese. Just give me all the corn and the cheese.

Amanda: Yeah. Cheesy corn is that like it's definitely the most important thing to love what you're writing, because you're gonna have to read it so many times and just spend so much time with it.

Sabrina: More than you think. Like, you think it's gonna be a lot, and then every time you get done with it, there's gonna be more. It's gonna to be more rounds.

Amanda: Yeah. And you're like, 'Oh, it's you again.' Even once you hit the publication stage, it's like, 'Okay, yeah, we finished our edits,' and it's like, 'Oh, here's the proofreader. Oh, here's the copy editor. Here's the copy editor again.' And definitely having that, like, that core of love for the project. Really, it keeps you going.

Sabrina: I think that's really important. I think that goes really well with what you were talking about earlier, about knowing the market and what will work in the market. And we were talking about, I mean, you never want to compromise that, either. Where did the book of my heart go? I hate for that to happen to anybody.

Amanda: Yeah. It's definitely like a balance. Yeah, I know, back when I started querying, what people talked about a lot was like, don't try and chase trends because the stuff coming out right now was acquired, like, a year or two years ago. You're never gonna be able to chase a trend because it's already happened. And it's like, you don't want to be like, 'Okay, I'm gonna write this to get published', because you're gonna end up hating it because you're like, 'I'm so sick and tired of seeing this book.' Especially when you're querying, it's like, yeah, there's no one there to tell you to do it.

Sabrina: It's all you.

Amanda: You're doing it because you love the book.

Sabrina: So especially at that stage, I think if you get any revisions, kinda going with what you were saying earlier as well, about the one where you were like, 'I don't want to do this.' And then you thought about it and were like, 'Let me try it.' I do think always

consider the... It's okay to say no to anything, but I do think it's always, know why you're saying no and know why you don't want to do it.

Amanda: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

Sabrina: And if it's something small, I always say try it.

Amanda: Just to see, yeah.

Sabrina: Don't delete what you had, like, and love. But you could have tried, like, a chapter in first person versus the third. And you probably did. You probably didn't sit and go, 'I'm gonna finish the whole book.' You were probably liking it as you went.

Amanda: Well, what was interesting with that one, is that I had gotten reader feedback that the protagonist felt kinda, like, distant. So later when I got that Revise and Resubmit about in first person, it was like, 'Oh, of course I don't want to do it', at first, but once I thought about it, it was kinda like, 'Oh, that's gonna kinda fix that problem I had before.' Yeah, once you think about it a little more, sometimes you can kinda get past that initial, like...

Sabrina: Yeah, it's really hard to get feedback sometimes, especially something that is totally out of left field from what you were expecting, and then to apply it, as well. When your heart is not in -- I don't even know if you can apply it well when your heart is not in it.

Amanda: Yeah. Well, it's funny. One of my friends. She's an artist. And she was doing a class. And we were talking about how when you have - either it was her art piece, or like, when I turn in a book. I know it's not perfect. And I know it needs help. But there's a piece of you, a secret little piece of you that's like, 'Well, maybe they're gonna be like 'This is amazing. This is perfect. It needs nothing.' And, every time, so, you're just like, 'Oh, my secret dream that I'm perfect now is dead.'

Sabrina: I know. Even when I'm like, 'Please demolish this' with my readers, I'm just like, 'What do you mean you have feedback?'

Amanda: Yeah, you're supposed to love it. But then when they do have no feedback, you're like, 'No, I know it's not perfect. Tell me.' You just can't win as a writer.

Sabrina: Yeah, exactly. What do you wish you'd known before you started querying?

Amanda: What I wish I'd known. Well, it's kinda the perspective that you get from doing it and just that it is business. It is intrinsically personal because this is a book that you spent all this time on, and it's like a piece of you, but when you're rejected, it's not - you personally are not being rejected. And it's definitely okay. It's okay to be rejected. It's not the end of the world. There will be other books. There will be other yeses. That sort of thing. But unfortunately, that's only something you can learn from experience, but also, how to do it well, because my first ones were not fantastic.

Sabrina: Yeah. I always like getting readers on stuff because they don't read the same to me as they read to other people sometimes, I don't think, especially those early ones. I really like agents that are very forgiving with the queries because they're like, 'Let's go see the pages.' Because queries are hard. It's a whole different beast.

Amanda: Yeah. It's like you're a book writer, not a queryer. They're totally different skills.

Sabrina: I mean, it's like synopsis. Synopsis is hard, too.

Amanda: Yeah. And it also has to be like two pages and you're like, 'But my clever subplots, they're important.'

Sabrina: Yeah. It's really interesting to see what shows up in the synopsis, and the query, to get people reading versus seeing the whole thing, because there's so many. I feel like a lot of books, the things that make me really, actually fall in love with them aren't the things that are in the query or a synopsis.

Amanda: Yeah. It's like the heart of it. That's kinda a scary thing because my second book, like I said, it's already written, but it was sold on proposal, which is like the first three chapters, and the

synopsis. And so, it's kinda like, 'How do you know you're gonna like it?' I mean, yeah, you read the synopsis, but...

Sabrina: Right, you get a feel of the voice and stuff. We've gotta put more trust in these professionals. They know what they're looking for. They can tell. You might not be able to fill in all the blanks.

Amanda: Yeah. It's a whole new scary thing. Like, 'You're putting too much trust in me.'

Sabrina: It's super scary. Yes. But the nice thing is this is with the same editor? So, you have had a whole book together. They get you as an author as well, by that point. So, I think that's really important.

Amanda: Yeah, and it helps. Well, you liked the first one enough, and it's me again.

Sabrina: Yeah. What's the hardest or biggest, or both, revision you've undertaken?

Amanda: Well, okay. Well, the biggest was definitely the entire rewrite.

Sabrina: Yeah. No, I can't imagine getting bigger than that. Those are pretty much the end all be all of big.

Amanda: Yes. Well, that one's my white whale because I revised it once, I rewrote it once, and then now I kinda want to rewrite it again, to be adult fantasy.

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh.

Amanda: That's someday.

Sabrina: You've still got to think about that a little bit more because it's such a big undertaking?

Amanda: Yeah. Or like, to tackle that one. That's the biggest one. I guess the hardest one was probably in *Aces Wild* because, like, I talked about going too far and then having to pull back a little bit, because heists are really annoying to write, and I'm not gonna do one again.

Sabrina: I bet they're really hard. Yeah. Talk to me about putting a heist book together and like, the different kinda like, is there any, like, fun research you did that you didn't expect you'd have to do? Or like, the intricacies of planning a heist in real life and then having to write about one... I can't, my mind is boggled.

Amanda: Yeah. I'm like, I'm really not this smart. The most interesting research well, so in the book, the casinos are fictional, so I could just do whatever I wanted with those. But the funniest bit of research was at one point there is a chase scene on foot, and so they're running down the New York strip and I had to - I'm pulling up a map, like a street map, and I'm like, 'Okay, how do I not get them run over?'

Sabrina: Oh, my gosh. Are you thinking about time at this point here? How long does it take to cross the...

Amanda: Yeah. Like, how long do these lights go? And I'm looking at it and I'm like, 'Okay, well, there's a foot bridge, but it's kinda around the corner.' And like, if you're chasing, you're not gonna go around the corner. So, it's very like, 'What street is that?'

Sabrina: That's a fun one.

Amanda: Yeah, it was fun. I love a chase scene.

Sabrina: Yeah. Were there anything else like that? That was like super challenging? I mean, no spoilers, obviously.

Amanda: I guess, one thing was a little challenging was describing blackjack in a way that wasn't boring. Because blackjack features heavily. And I was like, not everybody knows the rules of blackjack, so I was like, okay, I do have to include those. But I definitely tried to really bring out Jack's voice with that and kinda make it like a fun thing instead of just like, 'Hey, sidebar, here's how it goes.'

Sabrina: That's so fun. How long did -- I can't remember if you said this earlier, so if this is a repeat, everybody, I'm really sorry. How long did it take you to draft *Aces Wild*, like, before you put it out there? Do you remember?



Amanda: I don't totally remember. I always, like, fudge the timeline on this one.

Sabrina: The last few years, they all just blur, don't they?

Amanda: Yeah, definitely. Maybe like two or three months. So, when I'm seriously drafting, I do 1,000 words a day. Sometimes I go a little over, but usually it's like I'm more, like, consistent than like 'I wrote 10,000 words today.' So, usually if I'm being serious about it, I can do like two and a half months...

Sabrina: And, like dedicated every day?

Amanda: Yeah, like committed, like, okay. I always do the math. I'm like, 'If I write 1,000 words, how many days?' And this one's not super long because I was writing fantasies before, so I was writing like, 100,000 words. And this one, it's a little longer, now. It's more like 86,000 words now, but I think when I was querying it, it was like 80,000. So, I was like, 'Wow, this is like a vacation compared to a 100,000 word fantasy.'

Sabrina: Yeah, no, that makes sense. I don't even necessarily notice it when I'm reading a book, but when you're writing one, those words, they're big.

Amanda: You're like, yeah, especially I don't outline.

Sabrina: I was gonna ask next if you're a pantsers or a plotter. Oh, my God. Okay, yes. Take us. Go.

Amanda: Yeah, no, I am not a plotter. I am fully a pantsers, or discovery writer, or whatever you want to call it. I'm writing my little book and I'm like, 'Oh, my God. I still have, like, 50,000 more words to fill.' So, I'm kinda, like, scoping out the pacing as I'm going.

Sabrina: That's interesting. Pantsers amaze me.

Amanda: It keeps me going because I guess the exciting part of drafting for me is like, 'What happens next?' So, if I try and outline, I'm

like, 'Well, I already know what happens next' so it's not exciting anymore. The fun part about pantsing for me is that a lot of times I'll just come up with a detail just for flavor, and then like 30,000 words down the line it's a major plot point, and it's changed everything.

Sabrina: That's so funny.

Amanda: Yeah, it's kinda fun. Or, I'll make up a name and I'll have to go back and be like, 'What did I name them?'

Sabrina: Oh, okay. This person is coming back right now. I love it.

Amanda: Yeah, you're important now.

Sabrina: Well, how do you get through revisions at that point? Is it about just making it the best it can be? I'm always curious. You said the love of it is in the what comes next. So, once you know what comes next and you have to go back and do the extra work on it, how do you keep yourself engaged?

Amanda: Yeah, I guess at that point it's like -- because drafting is like the endurance part. I've got through all these words. That's where the passion comes in. And then once you're revising, it's easier because I already know the story now because I wrote it. So now it's like, 'Okay, now I'm gonna fix it.' I do a reverse outline where when I'm revising, I go make an outline, but it's all stuff I've already written, and that way I can see the beats.

Sabrina: Oh, that's a smart way to do it. And then you figure out what you need to do with it.

Amanda: Yeah, like, how can I tighten this?

Sabrina: Okay, that's smart.

Amanda: Yeah, then I put my brain in order. There's a Sci-Fi that I'm working on where I drafted it, and then I'm looking at the reverse outline. I'm like, okay, I can consolidate these characters into one, and that's tighter than it was before, but only because I already know what's already happened.

Sabrina: So, you said you try to knock out, like, 1,000 words a day. Do you have any other kinda, like, writing routines or rituals?

Amanda: Not really. It really is just like yeah, because I know some people can write like a whole bunch at once. I don't have the attention span for that, or like the endurance. Like 'Oh, I'm tired now.' For me it's just like I don't know, I say when I'm seriously drafting, like when I really want to finish something, I'll do the 1,000 words a day and I like, bargain with myself. I, like try to trick myself, I guess, where say I'm doing my 1,000 words a day and I'll write 1,300 words. So, I'm like, 'I only have to write 700 tomorrow.'

Sabrina: Oh, nice.

Amanda: But then the next day I'll write, like, 1,300 again and I'm like, 'Oh, I can be lazy tomorrow.' Which sometimes you need because I don't know, it's a busy day or whatever, so it kinda evens out.

Sabrina: Sometimes you do need that little break. Yeah, you can't be on all the time, especially with creative stuff. So, it's okay to have those little -- but I like that you have the structure. That does make sense if you have a goal of if I do 1,000 words a day and I want to end by this day and I go over, then yeah, you do, actually. You're totally on track. You're doing perfect.

Amanda: Yeah. So, by being productive, extra productive one day, I'm like, 'Oh, I'm doing myself a favor tomorrow.' So, it kinda gets me to keep working.

Sabrina: Yeah, you earned that break.

Amanda: Yeah, I think that's the only thing I really do. Other than that, I'm just like, 'Oh, my little Google Doc.'

Sabrina: Can you do it, like, anywhere?

Amanda: Yeah, usually I'm like I don't knock it all out at once. I kinda like, do a little bit. I don't know. Go on Twitter, go on whatever. Turn the TV on for a second, pause it, do some more.

Sabrina: Okay. So, you kinda do little bursts?

Amanda: Yeah. Check the word count every five minutes to see how good I'm doing. Yeah, I told my friends, I was like, I do it by I have rewired my brain to like when numbers go up. So, I see the word count go up and my brain is happy.

Sabrina: Nice. How do you stay organized?

Amanda: I don't. (Both laughing.) Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I'm really bad because... like my query stats. I was like, I had a little chart with names and dates and then by the end I'm like, yeah, whatever, whatever. I know when I was querying my fantasy, way back when, I had a paper chart of agents and responses that I kept on my bulletin board. And that helped because it was like because if it's just in my Google Docs, it's gonna get merged with everything else. But it it's in front of me, I'm like, okay. I finally had to break down because with the book coming out in a month. Finally, with all these deadlines and events and stuff. I asked my organized friend, I was like, what should I do to keep track of this? And so, she told me to get an Asana and I have a little Asana account with my... I had a little, I had a little task for this interview. I was like, 'Okay, get back to her about this.' And then it's on this day.

Sabrina: And yeah, you've got your little checklist, so I need to do these things this day and these things this day.

Amanda: Yeah. Well, that makes my brain happy because when I do it, I can hit the check mark and it highlights it.

Sabrina: Yes. That's always super satisfying.

Amanda: Yeah, I'm like, 'I accomplished a task.' That's only this last month. Everything before that I was like, oh yeah, it's all in my steel trap up here. But now I'm like, 'This is too much. Too many balls in the air.'

Sabrina: Yeah. Can you work on more than one project at a time?

Amanda: So, it kinda depends. Post book deal, my brain has gone through a blender. So, right now I'm balancing between things a lot. I

used to be a lot more... Well, so I used to have a couple options, usually two or three, and I'd write the first 10-15 thousand words and then kinda pick one and stick with it. I'm still kinda like that, but I'm a little more scattered just because I have a book coming out and my brain is in different places. So right now, I'm working on four different things at once. Just kinda like whatever my brain is, I've kinda tried to be nice to myself because I'm like, 'Okay, you know, this is just to work on something.' I'm not like on a deadline. I don't need to like, run out and sell this or whatever. I'm just kinda trying to do whatever my brain wants to work on.

Sabrina: Yeah, you need a good distraction right now too, with everything going on. So that makes perfect sense.

Amanda: Yeah, just have fun. I think a lot of debut authors do this where you have to kinda learn how to have fun with it again. Because when you have a book coming out, suddenly you're like, 'Oh, people are gonna read this and people are reading something else and I'm being seen'. At least until I have revisions, then I'll be in that world.

Sabrina: Yeah, no, that makes sense. And I'm sure like, you're gonna pop back in and you know, steady draft the next one.

Amanda: Yeah, once I know. Like with Peachtree, my next contract was a two-book deal, so I have a book coming out next fall with them, and then that's the one that I wrote on submission, and the third one isn't written yet, so I still don't know what book size that's gonna be.

Sabrina: So, you're kinda playing with a few different options and seeing what's calling you the most. Oh, that's extra fun right now, then. I love that.

Amanda: Yeah. So, I'm like, 'Okay, we'll see who my editor likes and who gets to win.'

Sabrina: That's cute. But they're all there and they're all waiting for you when you're ready.

Amanda: Yeah. I'm like, 'Don't worry, I'll get back to you guys eventually. Whoever wins.' Yeah.

Sabrina: So, you've talked about different genres and you did mention an adult, so have you ever thought about doing middle grade, as well?

Amanda: I actually started one in my start everything phase. It was cute because my cousin's daughter is seven... seven and a half, and she was like, "Have you written any books about wolves?" And I was like, "No, sorry to disappoint you."

Sabrina: How dare?

Amanda: I know. I was like, 'Well, I guess I should write a book about wolves.' I haven't worked on it in a while, but I started it and I kinda have a little bit actually outlined for that one, shockingly.

Sabrina: Uh-oh.

Amanda: I know. It could be the death sentence for that.

Sabrina: You can always throw it away if it's like, in your way.

Amanda: Yeah, if it's distracting me.

Sabrina: Yeah, you don't have to use it. What's your favorite tip to battle writer's block?

Amanda: I'm gonna be a broken record. It's really the consistency, is that 1,000 words. And it doesn't have to be a thousand. I know not everyone can write every day, but that's what works for me is to. And it's funny, I noticed this summer I developed this weird habit where I was afraid to write and it would happen when I broke my streak. Like, I would get all nervy about it, but if I just do like 500 words or 200 words or whatever every day, it makes it a habit. So, if I'm not doing it, I'm like, 'This feels weird. I'm gonna break my stride here.'

Sabrina: Yeah, no, I think that's a good way to look at it, too. And for anybody who can't write every day, then give yourself like a weekly goal, or a monthly goal.

Amanda: That's a good idea. Yeah. And looks like that would be 1,000 words. It's kinda like, it makes the word count look less scary because like, okay, yeah, 78,000 words. But if that's 1,000 words a day, at 78 days, that's a little over two months and it makes it look less impossible.

Sabrina: Yeah. Okay. Do you want to talk about *Aces Wild*? I'm super excited.

Amanda: I guess.

Sabrina: Okay, so do you want to tell us about it first?

Amanda: So, *Aces Wild*. I used to have it next to me, so I keep wanting to grab it.

Sabrina: Do it. I'm jealous. I don't get to hold it.

Amanda: So, it is about five asexual teens in Las Vegas, and it's really about, so, Jack's mom is a casino mogul and she gets arrested. But he is absolutely sure... I mean, he's sure she did the crimes for sure because it's a Las Vegas family. But, he knows that she is being blackmailed by Peter Carlevaro, his nemesis, who he hates. Who she hates, too, but used to be, like, friends with him, and it was a whole messy family thing. He gets his friends from his online asexual friend group to come in and help him break into Carlevaro's casino, his secret casino, high stakes gambling club, and take him down.

Sabrina: I love this! It sounds so fun. And I love a group of asexual teens. This is so awesome and such great rep that we really need on the shelf. I'm really excited about this.

Amanda: Yeah, it was funny when -- so part of the reason I wrote it that way was because there have been a lot of books around that time where they had, like, asexual side characters, and I was like, oh, that's cool. I loved that. But I was kinda like, 'I want there to be more than one. I don't want just the one. I want it to be the main character. I want there to be a bunch of them, and they're just there doing their little ace thing.'

Sabrina: That's such a genius idea of the online friend group.

Amanda: Yeah, it was definitely like because my D&D group, they're like my best friends. I met them online. So, it's definitely like a little love letter to online friendship.

Sabrina: Yeah, they're so important. They're super supportive, and sometimes you can't always find your people right next to you.

Amanda: But, yeah, that's kinda the whole thing.

Sabrina: I'm so excited to read. So, where did you get your inspiration for *Aces Wild*?

Amanda: So, it's kinda a funny story, I guess. So, I first started thinking about it. I was at a magic show, but it wasn't a very good magic show.

Sabrina: I'm sorry. Did you say you were at or you were in?

Amanda: I was at. I wish I was in a magic show.

Sabrina: Okay. I was like, 'Pause, rewind.' [Both laugh.]

Amanda: If only. No, I would've paid attention then. No, I was at a magic show. But, yeah, it wasn't a very good one. So, my mind was wandering, and I was like, okay, aces, asexual, cards, magic, Las Vegas. Obviously, we did not end up with magic. We ended up with blackjack instead. But I was like, well, I mean, the ace thing. [Dogs barking.] Sorry, my dogs.

Sabrina: It's okay. We love to hear the puppies on the podcast. My dog barks as a sign off. [Dogs barking.]

Amanda: But, they were being so good, and now they're being so bad.

Sabrina: There's like a threshold that they can reach in time, and then they're like, 'No, I need attention. You're here. Where's my attention?' No, I love that. Actually, that was one of the other things that I super love about your book, is the play of the *Aces Wild* with the casino and the cards and then the *Aces Wild* with the asexual characters. I love that. I think that's so fun.



Amanda: Thank you. Yeah, I think I saw the title then too. I was like, '*Aces Wild*. Okay. It's here. It's in my brain.'

Sabrina: Oh, did you really? You knew the title before you even started writing? That's amazing.

Amanda: Yeah. Typically, not always, but a lot of times I'll have the title, like, in the beginning, which it's a double-edged sword because, like, this one, I got to keep the title, the working title. The next one I didn't. So, I'm like...

Sabrina: Are you sad about it or did you like yours more?

Amanda: I'm just being overly attached. I'm like, 'Well, that's not what I've been calling it.'

Sabrina: Yeah. No, that makes sense. So, any other fun little tidbits you'd like to share with us about *Aces Wild*? That's not too spoilery, of course.

Amanda: I know. I mean, it's goofy. It's fun. [Laughs.]

Sabrina: I love the goofy heist. I'm ready for it.

Amanda: Yeah, I guess that's like my favorite thing about it is that it is a comedy. Like an action comedy, sort of.

Sabrina: That's unique.

Amanda: Yeah. Well, it was funny. So before, like I said, I mostly did fantasy or, like, contemporary fantasy. And so, I never really thought about comedy, even though I'd done comedy, like I'd written comedy for other things, just not books. So, when I was first thinking about this and, like, its early iterations, I was like, 'Oh, I can't write contemporary. I don't know how to make that cool.' Just like in high school, or whatever. And then finally I was like, 'I'm thinking about it as contemporary, when I should be thinking about it as an action comedy. That's what it is.' And it kinda unlocked that for me. Yeah. It's just funny, and fun, and goofy.

Sabrina: That's so fun. Can you give us a hint at what your second book is?

Amanda: It's actually already announced, so it's called *Wren Martin Ruins It All*. That was not my working title. I'm okay with that. But that one is an asexual rom-com.

Sabrina: Cute. That's so funny. Definitely. Yeah. I was really surprised to hear about all this fantasy background you have because of the fact that you've got the now two contemporaries.

Amanda: Yeah. Now it's two contemporaries.

Sabrina: Do you know yet if the third is gonna be contemporary?

Amanda: I don't know yet. So, I pitched my editor a few different things, a couple of contemporaries. One, more like, comedic contemporary fantasy, and then I slid my Sci-Fi in there, and I slid in a fantasy. So, we'll see what she lets me do. But my secret hope is the Sci-Fi.

Sabrina: Nice. Okay, so go back to your sequel. I'm sorry, I went off on a little tangent in the middle there.

Amanda: Oh, you're fine. Yeah. It's a YA rom-com, which I never thought I would ever do because there's a little bit of romance in *Aces Wild*. It's like a minor subplot, but my romances are always, like, very low key. And so, I was like, 'I'll never write a romance.'

Sabrina: And now it's a focus.

Amanda: Yeah, but I don't know. I think even when you read it, you'll be like, okay, I see. I don't know, it's hard to explain.

Sabrina: I'm excited. I'm very excited about all of them.

Amanda: Yeah. And I think it'll be a good follow up to *Aces Wild*. Because they both are very, like, weirdo voicey protagonist, goofy comedy stuff. So, I'm excited. I'm excited for the next one because I'm like, okay, let's get this first one over with. We're at the hard part now.

Sabrina: Yes, you're at the very last wait before it comes out. And then you get to wait for the second one.

Amanda: Yeah. A whole other year.

Sabrina: Oh my gosh. Is it the same month that it's coming out? Do you know yet?

Amanda: I don't know yet. I know it'll be the fall again. But I'm not sure what month yet, so it'll be a surprise.

Sabrina: Is your third supposed to be the next year in the fall?

Amanda: I think so. At least as far as I know right now. I think it's tentatively, like fall 2024, but I guess we'll see.

Sabrina: Okay. Publishing dates are so....

Amanda: I know. That's like a million years in the future. It's not even written yet.

Sabrina: So weird. I know. I'm like, never in my life would I be planning things four years out.

Amanda: Yeah. When I got the call about this one, I was like, fall 2022? That's like 1.000 years from now. And here we are.

Sabrina: They do eventually show up. They do get here. There's a lot of anticipation between then, I'm sure, though.

Amanda: Yeah. You almost kinda forget that it's happening and suddenly you're like, 'Oh, okay.'

Sabrina: Yeah, 'I already forgot. I've been working on four other projects since then.'

Amanda: Yeah. I've moved on emotionally.

Sabrina: Oh, my goodness. Okay. Do you have any recently released or upcoming books you'd like to recommend?

Amanda: Oh, boy. Oh, no. That would imply I've been reading, which I have been struggling with lately.

Sabrina: I understand.

Amanda: Well, I'll take the opportunity to plug my release date buddies. So, it's funny. So, my book is coming out and so is my friend Michelle -- I'm gonna say her name wrong. I'm so sorry. Mohrweis, I think she has a middle grade coming out that day with Peachtree called *The Trouble with Robots*. And one of the main characters is asexual. And then also Emma Ohland has *Funeral Girl* that's coming out that day that also has an asexual main character. So, it's gonna be a very asexual day.

Sabrina: Oh, it's gonna be like a whole ace party. Yeah. Okay, cool. Okay. All the ace books are coming out, so get your ace on everybody. Okay. And then where can we find you and your book?

Amanda: So, my website is just amandadewitt.com, and I recently redid it. So, it's got cute little graphics, and you can find all the links on there. You can also find me at Twitter @AmandaMDeWitt, and Instagram, I am am.dewitt, and on Tik Tok I'm also am.dewitt, but there's not really much on there.

Sabrina: Okay, cool. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Amanda: Yeah. Thank you for having me.

[Upbeat music starts, and fades.]

Sabrina: Okay everyone, that's all for Episode 3. You can find a Content List and all the Amanda links on the Show Notes page of my website. Thanks so much for joining us!

Sabrina: Okay, Ginny. Say goodbye.

Ginny: [Barks.]

[Upbeat music ends.]

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**Amanda's Book:**

**Aces Wild: A Heist**  
(Peachtree Teen)

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**In This Episode:**

Artemis Fowl series by Eoin Colfer

Bartimaeus trilogy by Jonathan Stroud

Dungeons & Dragons

NetGalley

Asana

The Trouble With Robots by Michelle Mohrweis

Funeral Girl by Emma K. Ohland