

A Conversation with Camille Baker, author of *HAVE WE MET?*



Photo credit: Joclyn Torain

Q: How did you fall in love with storytelling?

A: When I was eight years old, my main source of entertainment was making up stories. I wrote them down along with illustrations, acted them out with my toys, and typed them on my grandma's computer. Now, I'm gathering oral stories from the elders in my family and it's making me connect with storytelling in an even deeper way.

Q: What inspired this book and your writing in general?

A: I soak up inspiration wherever I can get it! Surefire ways to spur my creativity include relocating to different cities, going on adventures with my friends, and accepting out-of-the-norm gigs as a sign language interpreter. This book in particular was inspired by my move to Chicago, my search for new local friends, and the magical feeling I get whenever I'm in the city.

Q: *HAVE WE MET?* features a diverse cast. Why was it important to you to include people of different ethnicities, sexualities, and disabilities?

A: My goal with every novel I write is to craft a world as diverse as the one I inhabit. If I didn't, it wouldn't be authentic. In my work, I aim to create a space for my family, friends, and the communities I'm a part of to see themselves in.

Q: *HAVE WE MET?* strikes a balance between both romantic and platonic relationships. What message were you hoping to send with this portrayal?

A: The possibility of romance excites me, but my friendships sustain me. With this book, even more than the fun romantic aspect, I wanted to show how life-saving friends are.

Q: For this being a lighthearted book, *HAVE WE MET?* still attempts to tackle tough inner conflicts, such as grief. Why did you choose to discuss grief in this manner?

A: My first experience with grief happened when I was a young, when I hadn't yet conceptualized the permanence of death. That influenced my lens on how I view grief. To me, grief is the thread that sews you back together. It changes you, but it also makes it possible for you to laugh again.