

## Maker: Daughter of Time, Book 3

**Erec Stebbins**

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*Exploratory fiction at its most powerful and intelligent, Maker will challenge and reward all those who have ever wanted to believe in almost anything.*

Erec Stebbins concludes his *Daughter of Time* trilogy with a novel that manages to outpace its predecessors in its capacity to induce awe. *Maker* is a continuously rewarding science fiction work in which many surprises reach cosmic proportions.

*Reader* and *Writer* introduced Ambra Dawn, a gifted girl ill-fated to become a deity. Ambra's supernatural goodness pitted her against interplanetary dark forces that redoubled in their terribleness and continually threatened to end the universe. In *Maker*, though she is hideously altered, Ambra becomes more lovable, indomitable, and tragic, particularly as her power winds into dangerous territory.

Stebbins has a penchant for the unexpected, even for the genre. Throughout the series readers have been asked, alternately, to participate in Earth's salvation, to tackle metaphysical notions related to universal cosmology, and to absorb sometimes horrific fates for the most beloved characters in the books. These are works that nurture wonder and sometimes break hearts.

Yet *Maker* outdoes the previous volumes, both in unforeseen developments and in its wondrous and gorgeous narrative descriptions. Nothing is as expected. This final installment is narrated by Waythrel, the virtuous central character thought lost in *Writer*, who now may have to destroy creation in order to repair it. To do so, Waythrel works beside Kloan, a product of the vile Anti.

Reactions to each protagonist cannot be based upon their previous presentations. Readers must instead join them in their dizzying and time-jumping dances of discovery, becoming reacquainted with them as they go. Waythrel is afforded more depth in this book, with the Xixian distance dismantled; and Kloan, more than a mere monster, manages to charm and inspire. "But all the angels are mad, Waythrel—don't you know that?" she asks her companion, and through Waythrel's credulity, audiences come to discover and respect fragility, even in probable villains.

*Maker* more than rewards all necessary suspension of disbelief. Tropes that would be frustrating in many other literary capacities are put to work beautifully here, including repetition: Kloan and Waythrel use the orbs, whose source is finally revealed, to jump through space and time, finding themselves learning in the same places, but different, again and again. Waythrel's memory functions in a revelatory way, and the alien's recurrent sense of devastation, as well as reconstructed awareness, will demand much from those who are also learning through Waythrel's experiences.

Winding, ancient labyrinths that anticipate their travelers manage to expand the borders of holy texts, and innumerable gods resurrected and encountered force consideration of the meaning of worship and existence. This is exploratory fiction at its most powerful and intelligent. *Maker* will challenge and reward all those who have ever

wanted to believe in almost anything, and Stebbins's artistic ingenuity throughout will astound.

There's something in this book for everyone, from aesthetes and theologians to scientists. *Maker* is a brilliant conclusion to a series that tests the elasticity of imagination, with consistently stunning results.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (December 4, 2014)

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