

CALLIOPE REAPER- JONES

Series Concept by Javier Grillo-Marxuach

Based on the Novels by Amber Benson

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INTRO: Amber and I know each other from a writers group in which we shame each other into productivity. We call ourselves "the Shamers" and Amber finished her last two novels in this group.

Amber has trusted me to adapt the Calliope Reaper-Jones series for TV -- in success, I will be doing the adaptation, writing the script and showrunning, she would come in as a writer/producer in the event of a series.

Here is what inspired her to create this character:

THE NOVELS:

AMBER: Tells the story of what inspired Amber to write the Calliope Reaper-Jones series, wanted to create a female character who could go through the Hero's Journey.

JAVI: In 2009, Amber introduced Calliope Reaper-Jones in the novel *Death's Daughter*: the first book of a projected trilogy. Four years later, the Calliope Reaper-Jones books are a true urban fantasy success story: the trilogy has since expanded to five novels with *Death's Daughter* now in its fourth printing.

THE SET-UP:

Calliope Reaper-Jones (imagine Krysten Ritter if she had taken Grace Coddington as her life model) is a young fashionista building a life that would be the envy of many a girl in the city.

Less than a year out of FIDM, she's gotten a job as an assistant stylist at VOLUP, the nation's leading plus-size fashion magazine -- as well as a great loft in the Los Angeles Fashion district, which she shares with HYACINTH (HI) ZAVALA, a plus-sized model best described as the Puerto Rican Christina Hendricks.

Occasionally, Calliope Reaper-Jones sees a dragon at her front door, or is accosted by a homeless person who wants to wash her

feet - but these things usually happen at the end of a night of Midori sours and clubbing.

Although she puts in long hours and barely sees her friends and family - and the dating has been the usual parade of Los Angeles financial district douchebags - she's totally killing it, loving it, and doing it all without the help of her father, the billionaire CEO of a vast multinational company: a man who has traditionally cast a very long shadow over all of his children's endeavors...

Calliope Reaper-Jones's father is Richard Branson, by way of Steve Jobs, by way of Alec Baldwin as Jack Donaghy - a man whose company provides has a large headquarters building in every city and who commands a service everyone uses at some point, a man whose name is a household word -

...until one day, when Jarvis - her father's Executive Assistant (imagine him as Zachary Quinto as Spock in a natty three piece suit: a fastidious, exacting, unfailingly well-dressed martinet with a strong sense of agenda and precision) -- shows up at her doorstep with some terrible news.

Daddy has been kidnapped, along with eleven members of his company's board of directors.

Calliope has to return home. She also has to eat a cupcake...

AMBER: Why a cupcake?

...laced with a potion that reverses the spell she cast on herself five years ago.

The spell that allowed her to forget the true nature of the family business and the universe she inhabits.

You see, Calliope's father is the Angel of Death.

But this isn't the Grim Reaper as you think you know him - this isn't a scythe-wielding skull under a cloak - Calliope's father is the CEO of Death, Inc. - an empire spanning every corner of the globe, employing millions of Reapers of various emotional dispositions... and tasked with keeping moving the system by which souls pass from Earth through the great beyond.

Callie's father is the kind of character Victor Garber has played in countless ABC Dramas over the years: a patrician captain of industry who wears expensive suits, wears italian loafers and a Corum Admiral's cup watch, commands a vast business concern, and has many, many secrets...

...and an even bigger number of enemies who would stop at nothing to take for themselves the power and prestige of his position.

Now Calliope Reaper-Jones must return to her family's manse - the beautiful home called "Sea Verge" - the place where she grew up, and face the past: her mother, who loves the Grim Reaper with fervent zeal...

AMBER TALKS ABOUT HOW MOTHER IS BASED ON JANE SEYMOUR - AND HER FRIEND AMANDA'S MOM

...and her youngest sister, Clio (imagine Ellen Page when she was on "Re-Genesis" OK - just plain Ellen Page) - a high schooler with a growing curiosity for the family business and a highly inquisitive sense of the world.

NOTE: The surefire sign that you are being pitched to by a 43 year old white guy is that they put a hacker in every ensemble... well, Clio is not a hacker - she is a maker: loves science, has a 3-d printer and the heart of an anarchist, she wants to take the world apart, and see how it works.

Then there's Thalia: who has spent her life being the good older sister and trying to make herself worthy of the head office... think of her as Amanda Peet in a Chanel Suit and Dior pumps... she wants it all, but has only been made VP of Asia, and she hates Calliope...

...because the truth is that Calliope is the true heir...

...and now she must assume the mantle and take her father's place and resign the life she has built for herself - unless she can find him alive.

THE PILOT: Things only get worse for Calliope when she arrives at Sea Verge - where DETECTIVE DAVENPORT of the PBI (Paranormal Bureau of Investigation) is running the campaign to recover her kidnapped father...

...because he has learned that Calliope has had ten million dollars deposited into a bank account in her name.

In short, she has been framed for the kidnapping and must now escape her own home and prove to her family that this awful event is not part of her disdain for the family legacy!

Rushing back to the city with Jarvis in tow, Calliope finds herself cut off from everything when the PBI storms her house, freaking the hell out of Hy...

...and what's more when her now sees the world as it really is - teeming with supernatural creatures taken from all the pantheons of human faith and spirituality, walking among humans, or...

...as Amber herself puts it in Death's Daughter:

“...as humanity changed, so did the Afterlife. Human beings were forever denouncing their religions, deciding that this God, or that Goddess, was out of favor, and anyone who believed in them would be killed, or castrated. That didn't mean those Gods and Goddesses ceased to exist when their religions faded. Quite the contrary, in fact. Rather, they became part of the larger framework of the Afterlife, working to maintain the steady flow of souls in and out of Heaven and Hell. Some of them worked for Death directly, like the Anubis Brothers; others took on a more managerial position in the company...”

THIS PASSAGE IS CRUCIAL TO OUR MYTHOLOGY - it explains how all the Deities and Demigods of the ancient world still live among us.

AMBER: Inspired by Joseph Campbell.

JAVI: So in our world, Quetzacoatl could be a Novela leading man ion Univision, Wodin of the North is a corporate defense attorney, Hera runs a Greek diner, the Anubis Borthers are like the Shahs of Sunset, running a chain of jewelry stores and nightclubs...

...all of these Gods move among us, and have a role to play in the management of the celestial clockwork that keeps the flow of souls in this life and all of the others...

...these characters live and breathe among us, this is not about dual worlds, but about magic and gods in our everyday life!

GETTING BACK TO THE PILOT:

It is now up to Calliope to singlehandedly expose a conspiracy involving the Hindu Demon Vritra, a rogue faction in the PBI, and - behind it all - Yamatanka, the Tibetan Ender of Death (who will become the Big Bad of the first season), to manipulate circumstances to take for themselves the power of death.

But Calliope Reaper-Jones is not alone in this quest... helping her are Jarvis, her younger sister Clio, comes along for the ride and stays on, proving her value - and Daniel...

AMBER TALKS ABOUT DANIEL AND HIS ROLE IN URBAN FANTASY

...because every Urban Fantasy requires a tortured love interest, and Daniel is the ultimate in handsome, square-jawed men with a dark past.

Once he was the Devil's protege and heir to his throne.

JAVI: Yes, that Devil, Baal, Belial, Beelzebub, the Prince of Darkness...

... but Daniel repented his evil ways, and has decided to spend his life doing penance and seeking to thwart his former mentor, which will invariably bring him - and his twisted agenda - into Calliope's path.

See, the reason Calliope chose to cast the spell of forgetting on herself is that the Devil sent Daniel to seduce her when she was a high schooler... had she succumbed to his charms, the entire scaffolding of the Universe would have been undone.

After resisting his charms, Calliope left her father's world once and for all... until now...

Then of course, there are Calliope's newfound powers - the ability to travel the world through the network of wormholes that propel the reapers through the totality of creation, and

the voice of death, the ability to kill anyone with a word (a power she will - naturally - use VERY sparingly)... as well as a few magical surprises borne from her ability to touch a world beyond our own.

At the pilot's end, Callie will have solved the mystery of her father's disappearance by finding the true mastermind behind the conspiracy... her envious older sister, Thalia, who nevertheless escaped to become a lifelong enemy to the middle sister she deems unworthy.

...an while Thalia will be excommunicated from the family, she will be like Loki, sometimes helping, usually hindering, always scheming.

And yes, there is a story to how she unwinds the mystery... she learns that the PBI is not really investigating, that Davenport was killed years ago and his body was taken over by Vritra... who secretly married Thalia!

But that's all plot... here are the two important franchise details:

Reunited with her father - who truly loves and believes in her - Callie strikes a deal. She will not recast the forgetting spell - she will go back to her fashionista life, and occasionally do odd jobs for her father: helping him solve the kinds of problems that no mortal can handle while getting to know him and the family business.

Because any time a life is taken without death's consent -any time a supernatural creature tries to upset the apple cart - the very fabric of the universe is threatened.

There is - in short - no death without occasion, and in this case, people died who were not supposed to die: and that's a problem.

Now that he knows he can't trust the PBI to do their job, Calliope's father needs a useful and resourceful agent - a fixer - someone he can trust, someone who has proven her mettle and whom he secretly wants to groom to take over his legacy.

In Calliope Reaper-Jones, the TV series, Death is not a bad guy: he is rather the person in charge of keeping the order of life

while being besieged on all sides by evil forces who would stop the natural order of the world...

... and whether dear old dad is opposed by demons seeking to take souls for themselves, supernatural hucksters promising eternal lives, gangs of former deities wanting their old prestige back by taking a bite off the head guy in the totem pole...

...and even mortal witches and magic practitioners seeking to steal power from the spirit world (or even the occasional werewolf or vampire)... Calliope Reaper-Jones will now be duty-bound to step in and take care of business...

...while occasionally designing fabulous plus-size outfits in her awesome job.

THE SERIES: Imagine Supernatural meets Sex and the City.

The "monster of the week" currently lacks a truly iconic and empowered female hero who represents the balance of self-reliance and career and family life.

Calliope Reaper-Jones is that hero.

An Angeleno who lives a glamorous life - and whose glamorous life just happens to include the knowledge that the Mahabharata is currently being played out between Robertson and Melrose, that the Chronicles of Cheonjiwang are the biographies of a bunch of people living near Western and Wilshire, and that Gilgamesh and Enkidu lead quiet lives in West Hollywood...

Also, this is not Dead Like Me - our stories are not about avenging death, but about keeping people from dying before their time at the hand of supernatural creatures, avenging the unauthorized deaths of innocents...

...and solving the embarrassing problems of the Deities and Demigods who serve her dad...

OUR MYTHOLOGY IS ACTUAL MYTHOLOGY

The pantheons of Greece, Rome, China, India, Europe, the Middle east - in modernity and antiquity, with all their demons and monsters - are to us what the Grimm stories are to Grimm and Fairy tales are to OUAT.

Every week, Calliope Reaper Jones's father will have a problem that needs to be solved - and she will be on the case along with Jarvis and Clio (who gets into USC and moves to Echo Park), who will form the core of the ensemble at the center of the series...

THOR'S HAMMER - OR NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT - IS STOLEN AND USED TO KILL INNOCENT VICTIMS

THE ANUBIS BROTHERS NOTICE A SPIKE IN NIGHT CLUB DEATHS OF CELEBRITIES

AN ONI TAKES UP RESIDENCE IN MULHOLLAND AND TRADES UP FROM EATING COYOTES TO HIKERS

STERCULIUS, ROMAN GOD OF FECES, WINDS UP ENTANGLED IN A SOPRANO-LIKE MOB WAR (because, you know, waste management)

...with Daniel and Thalia as recurring characters - one of them wanting to love her, the other wanting to vanquish her... eventually by seducing Daniel!

THE TONE: A light and sassy case-of-the-week format with a strong undercurrent of dark romance and a flexible long-ranging mythology spanning all of human history.

Calliope and Daniel's will be a tortured romance for the ages - but in truth, her life consists of fear and fashion: juggling the demands of work with the demands of family... only in her case, the demands of family include fighting supernatural beings from every mythology on Earth.

Unlike so many shows with this kind of subject matter, this is not a series about awful sacrifices made in the fight against evil, but about how the truly good can have it all: work, family, self-esteem, and fabulous clothes.

THE THEME: Above all things, Calliope Reaper-Jones explores a dynamic currently underrepresented in television. This is a show about a father and daughter bound by a common destiny - learning to not only know and trust each other and to function as a bonded family unit, but also teaching one another. Father will bring wisdom to his child and become a trusted mentor, Calliope will teach her father to become a better and more modern man as he realizes that eventually, if she is to be his true heir, he must allow her to find and fulfill her destiny her way... even if that means allowing her to make the mistake of pursuing a romance with Daniel, who is absolutely wrong for her in every way.

Based on a best-selling series of novels written by a beloved genre figure, Calliope Reaper-Jones is a fresh take on an underrepresented genre: a fantasy show blending elements of romance and family drama with a comedic flair and an irresistible namesake.