

# Interviews with Indie Authors

By: Winona Veil

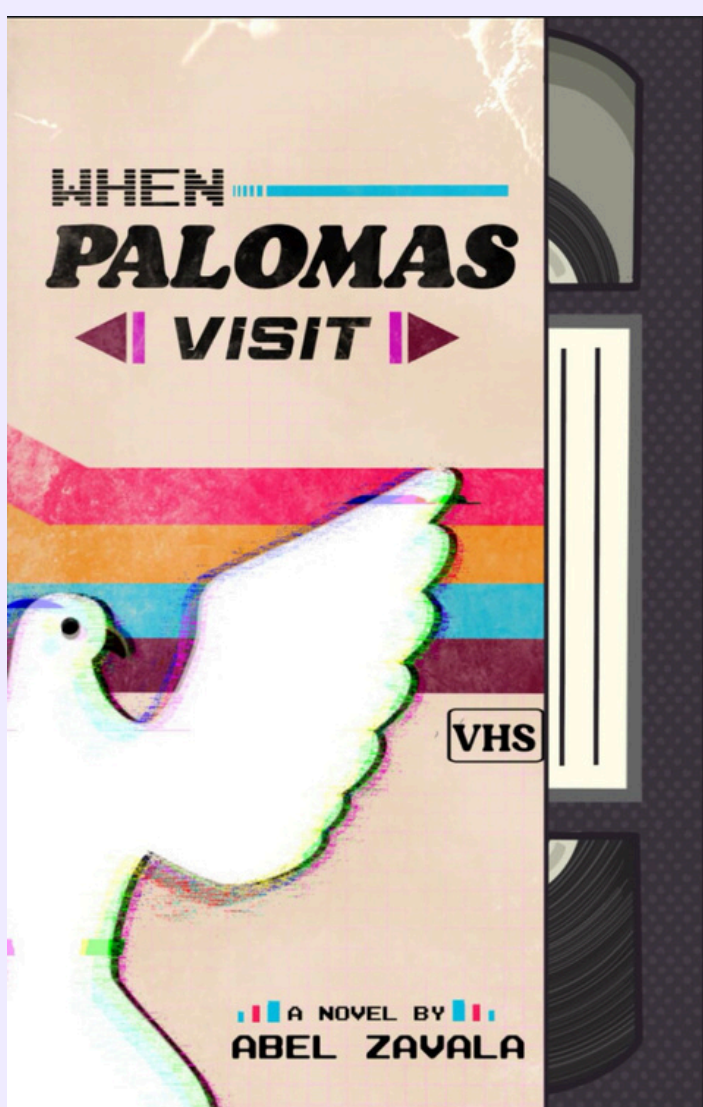
## Meeting Abel Zavala

### About the Author

Abel Zavala is an indie writer and owner of PoCho Libros, an online bookstore supporting Latine stories y libros en español. Zavala is also radio host for a Mexican radio station and a writer for their newspaper en español (La Mega 101.5 FM y La Mega Nota) - Winona Veil

### *When Palomas Visit*

“Damián wakes up in his eight-year-old body, where he is given the chance to relive some of his happiest moments and see his mother again. Torn between amazement and disbelief, he must navigate the past, re-examining the events that led up to his mother’s death in an attempt to change the outcome. In his race against time, Damián comes face to face with the secrets and lies that shaped his life. As the day of his mother’s accident approaches, Damián is forced to ask himself: If he fails to save her, can he let go of the past before it ruins his future?”- Abel Zavala



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## Meeting Rios de la Luz

### About the Author

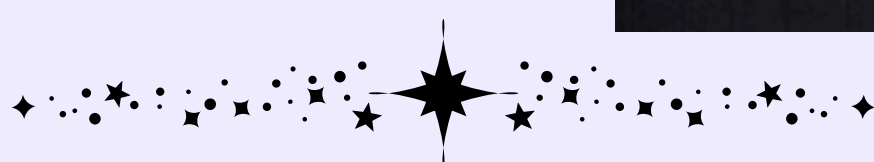
Rios blends magic and fiction into visceral stories about matriarchs, reclaiming our bodies after trauma, and liminal saints. She explores her Xicana/Guatemalteca, queer, and bruja identity through her short stories and novellas. Cultivating magic through community, Rios also hosts workshops and posts writing prompts that help you unlock the portal to your creativity.

—Winona Veil



### Itzá

“In her debut novella, Rios de la Luz examines the lives a small family of water witches living near the US-Mexico border. Exploring issues of race and trauma along with beauty and magic, Itzá is a powerful reclamation of body and identity.”- Rios de la Luz





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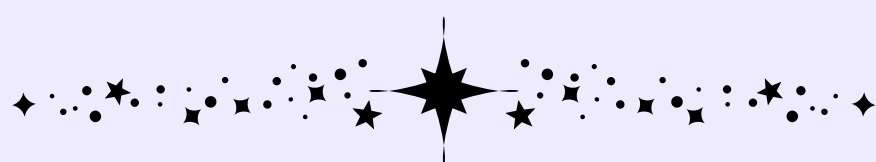
## Meeting Rios de la Luz

### More Books

- “With *An Altar of Stories to Liminal Saints*, Rios de la Luz returns with a new collection of stories inspired by her new life as a mother. Cults compete for dominance in a town divided by an ethereal rift, a woman is tasked with delivering magical packages, and a dying mermaid saves a young girl from a sinister pursuer in this genre-bending new collection. Blending the deeply personal and de la Luz’s love for the fantastic, *Saints* brings together ghosts and grief, demons and dirt eating, the immediately personal and the intensely whimsical.”- Rios de la Luz

### More Rios de la Luz

- “My first short story collection about the desert, borders, nepantla, magic, and weird Xicana girls. These stories are works of fantastical and experimental fiction. identity.”- Rios de la Luz



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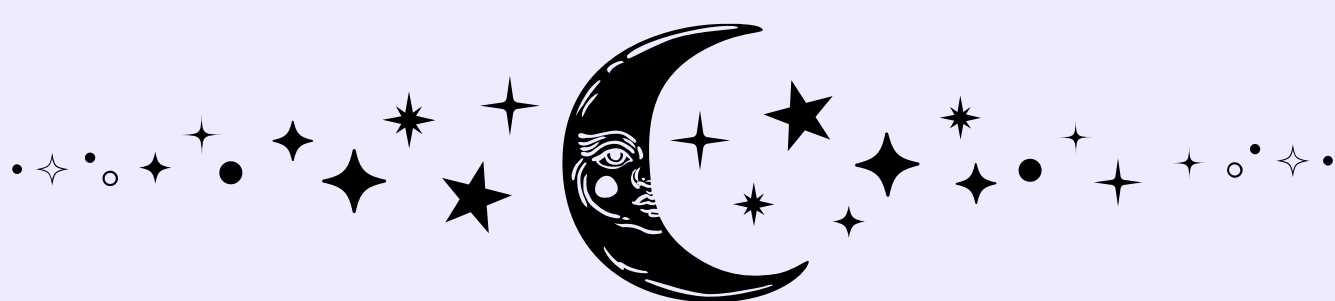
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## Interview with Rios de la Luz and Abel Zavala

**What advice do you wish you could tell yourself  
when you first started writing?**

“I would tell myself that it’s okay to slow down. There’s no rush in the writing process. I would tell myself that productivity isn’t everything. Also, once you stop seeking external validation, you will feel a weight lifted, you will be able to indulge and excavate from your wild imagination without fear.” -Rios de la Luz

“Keep writing and finish your story. One of the things I struggled with *When Palomas Visit* was completing the story. I knew where the story was going and how it needed to end, but when I began writing, I’d go back to the first three chapters. It wasn't until a friend and mentor, Victor Velez, said, "You HAVE to finish the story. You can edit later." And from there I completed that first draft fully. I still struggle with that with my 2nd novel, but at least my first couple of drafts were completed. Now, I tend to go back to a chapter to fix and return to that chapter again and again before moving on to the next one.”- Abel Zavala



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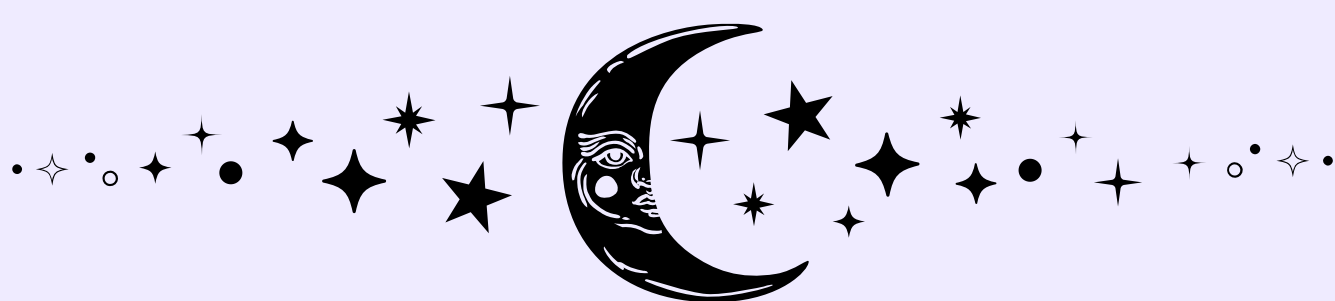
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## Interview with Rios de la Luz and Abel Zavala

### What inspires you?

“I’m inspired by motherhood, the warmth and the horrors of it. I am inspired by nature. I am inspired by poetry. I am inspired by going to art museums. I am inspired by movies and music.”- Rios de la Luz

“May be cliché, but everything. It’s a matter of keeping an open mind and minding your surroundings. I have an idea for a story of a husband who gets his wife’s brain transferred to him, and it came at a time my wife had some health issues, and I told her I wished I could take that pain from her. Or an idea for a story about a butterfly lost in its migration and the friends it meets to help it in its journey, and that came about due to re-reading about butterfly migrations to Mexico. Or an idea of someone hunting a witness after a car crash, and it came about after witnessing a crash when my wife and I visited family in Chicago, on our way home. The world can be our inspiration, so long as we pay attention.”- Abel Zavala





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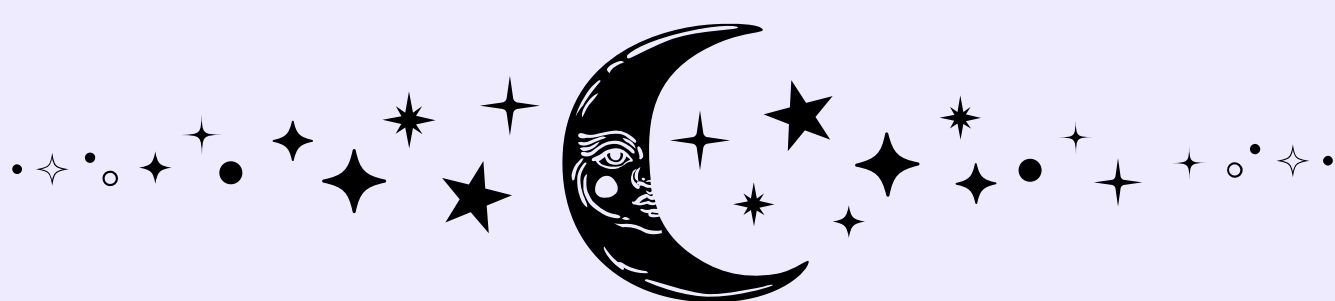
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## Interview with Rios de la Luz and Abel Zavala

**What aspect of your writing do you wish to improve on?**

“I am a gardener when it comes to writing stories. I plant seeds and sometimes something wonderful and vibrant emerges. Other times, the plants perish. I write from intuition which I know can sound silly, but this is true for me. I want to improve on mapping out a plot with beats and a formula, but I have never been that kind of writer. I am working on it though!”- Rios de la Luz

“Time-management. I tell myself I’ll get up early to work on my novel, and I end up working after work and on weekends. The problem with that is that I need time with my wife, or if I’m performing, need time to rehearse. Or if there’s a work event, must attend. When I was working on *When Palomas Visit*, I forced myself to work on it at 5 am until it was time to go to work, and, at times, once my wife went to bed. I need to get back into that routine. Other than that, I’m open to continuing to learn...”- Abel Zavala



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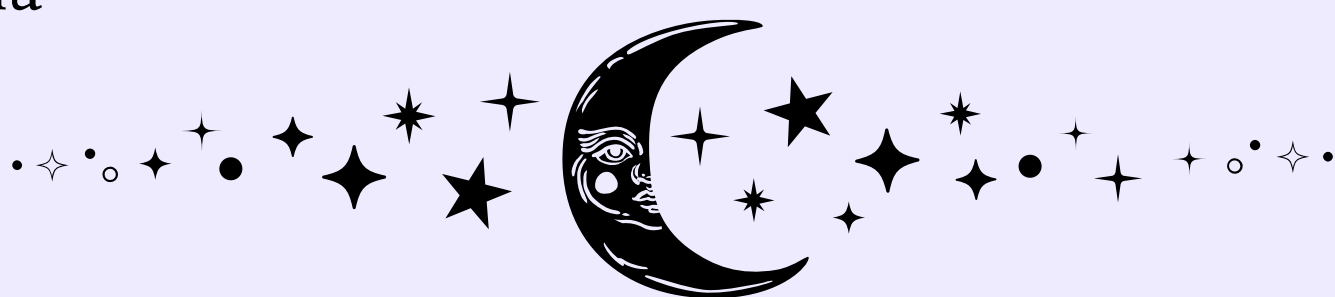
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## Interview with Rios de la Luz and Abel Zavala

### How do you take care of your spoons and spells (mental health)?

“For me, when I am feeling overwhelmed and exhausted and out of touch with myself, the first thing I do is take a break from social media. Usually, this is a weekend without going online. No scrolling, no posting, no checking anything except emails. The second thing I do is I go outside. I sit in the sunshine, I birdwatch, I listen to the wind. I look for the bunnies. I run from the bees and the wasps. I watch the clouds with my son. Third, I dance. I am not the best at it, so this consists of a lot of jumping. Fourth, I karaoke by myself. No one needs to hear me, but it feels good to scream and let go.”- Rios de la Luz

“Disconnect from the world (socials). I’m on socials most during work hours (8 am – 5 pm), and though I do scroll after and on the weekends, I try to keep that away. I work in radio, so I’m constantly looking for news, and there’s so... much... going on. I need to disconnect. Plus, it’s beneficial to disconnect when I’m working on my novel, otherwise I’ll fall into the trap of continuing to scroll instead of writing...After is for me and my wife, and the things we need to do or we want to do, such as read, go to coffeeshops, watch movies or our usual TV shows.”- Abel Zavala



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## Interview with Rios de la Luz and Abel Zavala

**What is an indie book you'd recommend?**

“Indie book recommendations: Mariaposa by Alma Rosa Azul published by Riot of Roses. The book is described as a “collection of radical poems” about being brown in America, about being Chicana, about activism, and of course, about love. the eaters of flowers by Ire’ne Lara Silva published by Saddle Road Press. This is a lush poetry collection about death, grief, love, and resilience. Ire’ne is one of my favorite writers and poets.” -Rios de la Luz

“*Smoke and Mirrors* by J.D. Laubach. I’ve known her for years, and I’m beyond impressed with the quality of her story and the work she puts into it. In the story, a brother and sister get separated through time in a world the sister thought was fiction through her brother’s stories, all of this after one of them steals from a god.” - Abel Zavala

