

DOUBT

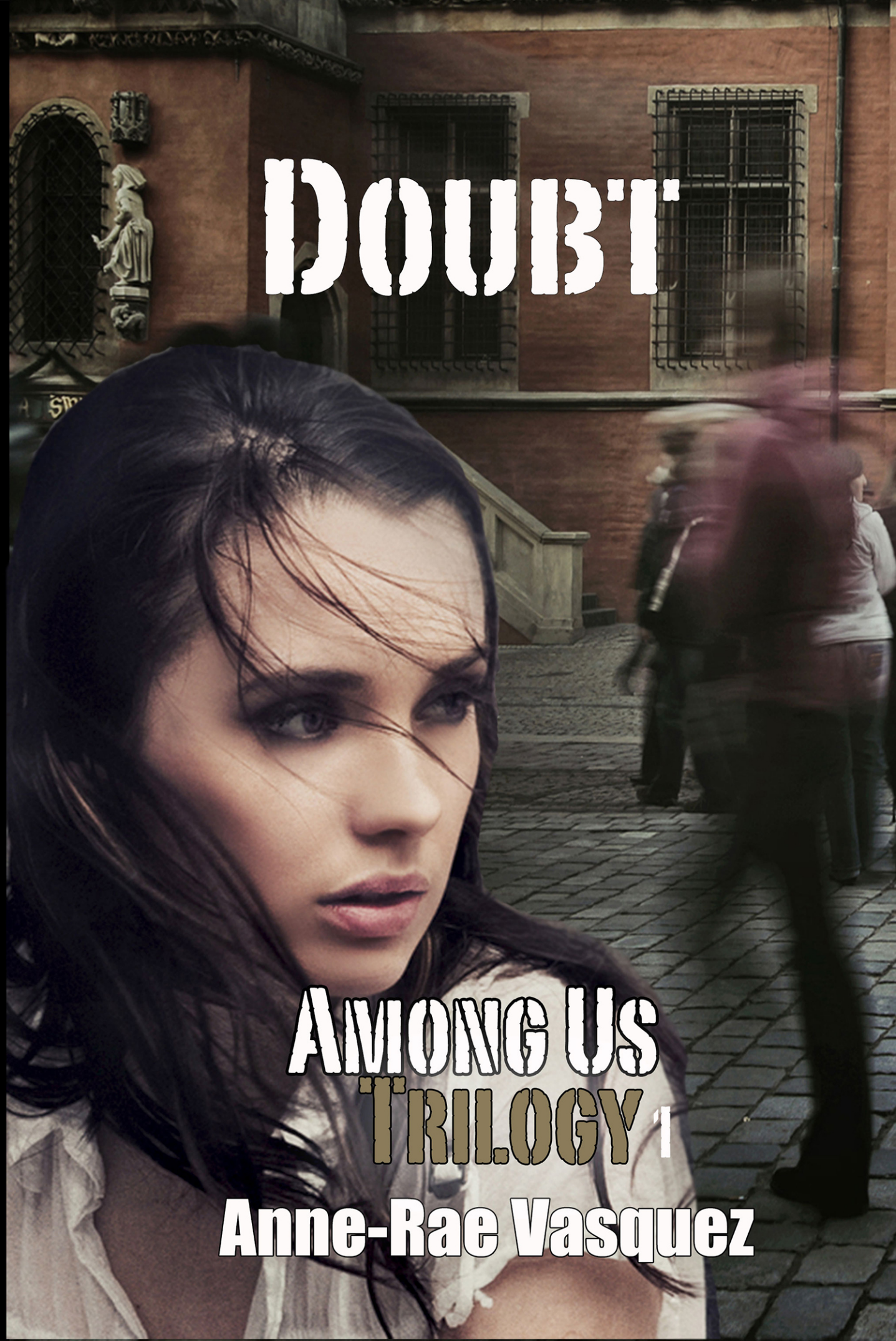
AMONG US TRILOGY

ANNE-RAE VASQUEZ

DOUBT

**AMONG US
TRILOGY 1**

Anne-Rae Vasquez



DOUBT

**Among Us Trilogy
Book 1**

Anne-Rae Vasquez

AR Publishing

This is a work of fiction. The events and characters described here are purely fictional and in no way represent or resemble real life events, places or people.

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AR Publishing

“... As a big fan of the show Fringe, this book appealed to me tremendously. The writing was well done, and the way the “supernatural” forces were introduced was great. The characters, primarily Harry and Cristal, were developed and built up very well, and had enough detail about their lives for us readers to understand them as people, not just characters. Genuinely looking forward to read the rest of the series when it comes out!”- *Melissa Greenberg, Inkspand review*

“It starts with a game designer and shining star programmer, Harry Doubt. ‘How was he going to convince online gamers to leave the privacy of their virtual world to work with others in the real world?’ is the question that ends chapter three. As someone who is married to an online gamer, that strikes me as a really good question...It was an excellent story that I’m sure both adult and teen urban fantasy fans will enjoy. You don’t have to be a gamer or know one to identify with the characters. They’re very well developed and definitely feel like people. I would definitely recommend it to a friend and I’m really looking forward to the second book.” – *Ginger Lego, Inkspand review*

“Doubt, Among Us Trilogy, by Anne-Rae Vasquez, was a good and refreshing read for me. I am not too into books about the supernatural, but the idea of gamers on assignments was intriguing...The author uses this story to show that we are spiritual in nature, either for good or for bad. Cristal and all of her associates often obey orders without question until good eventually overcomes and the reader is left with a lot to think about. I would recommend this book to a friend. I will read book two and three because of the interesting way the subject of angels and demons is approached. A good, clean read for any age.” – *S. Coleman, Inkspand review*

“Doubt is book 1 of an intriguing and exciting trilogy by Anne-Rae Vasquez. With enjoyable, vibrant young characters fighting a frightening unknown entity in a world that is about to self-destruct, Doubt will definitely

appeal to readers of all ages who love sci-fi supernatural thrillers.”- *Owen Choi, author of Amazon Best Seller, Tendrils of Life*

“Captivating, thrilling and compelling. The story is original and fresh—a definite ‘have to read’ for new adult urban fantasy fiction readers.”- *Libby Howell, book reviewer*

“A dystopian adventure, edgy and thought-provoking, which raises questions about what we’re doing to our society and planet. This gritty narrative which is fast paced and full of twists and turns is hard to put down till the end.” - *Cid Andrenelli, author of The Burqa Master*

“International intrigue, encryptions, and clandestine arrangements tumble together in this action-packed plot as young internet gamers use their skills to investigate who, or what, is behind the catastrophic events happening around the globe, led by this season’s newest, and most brilliant, master-mind – Harry Doubt!”- *Emily Hill, author of The Ghost Chaser’s Daughter and the Ghost Stories series.*

“Doubt is a must-read novel that has depth and substance mashed up with fringe science. If you read no other book this year, this is the one to read!” – *William Miller, author of Kyrathaba Rising*

“I like books that go straight to the point without a flood of unnecessary introductory words. And this one grabbed me from the beginning with the idea of time travel... I was also impressed by the fact that there were “pictures” of all main characters, including their avatars. I love being able to imagine exactly how they look like. The author’s style is light and pleasant to read and I read it very quickly. And when thing got more complicated I couldn’t stop reading.” – *R. Chelebieva, Inkspand reviewer*

“OMGosh! I just finished reading "Doubt"... INCREDIBLE! I couldn't put it down. Well developed characters with thoroughly explained relationships. Great background info - adds so much to the reader

knowing what is going on at all times. Cristal is a great lead. She is strong, smart, beautiful - a brilliant package.

Harry is a wonderful character - he's the smart, fearless leader whose childhood left him with a slight childlike innocence /immaturity and trust issues. The twists and turns and the espionage involving the gamers and the GN kept me on the edge of my seat. The paranormal aspect was something I wasn't expecting, but was pleased with. The flow/pace was great. The writing was smooth and there were enough ups and downs to keep a reader interested. I'm not sure what to expect next, but know that I can't wait to read more!" – *Lisa W, GoodReads member*

For Joseph whose vision and support inspired me to write this book. For my kids who inspired me to learn about the hidden talents of online gamers. For Kathleen who pushed the boundaries of my imagination. And for Josefina who helped me bring Harry, Kerim and Cristal to life. Finally, for the Truth Seekers who dared to believe.

In loving memory of Manny and Dee who are with us in spirit.

And a special tribute to Aaron Swartz and Harry Fear whose work inspire our youth to fight for truth and justice.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Truth Seekers for their contributions and participation in Harry Doubt's missions.

Josefina Rosado as Cristal Hernandez (alias Mist)

Anne-Rae Vasquez as Harry Doubt (alias Zero)

Jeanne Lee as Joanna Chan (alias Onyx)

Khaled Talib, author of Smokescreen as Rinaldo Ricci (alias Red Fox)

Donna Bonastella as Angelica Martinelli (alias Venus)

Macqueline Cajandab as Serena Keensky (alias Lioness)

Josefina Rosado, Anne-Rae Vasquez as Kerim Ilgaz (alias Shadow) and Gabriel (alias Graphix)

Kathleen McMahon as Jenna Adams (alias Celestial Nymph)

Dear Truth Seeker,

I believe in capturing history and this is my attempt to leave our story for the future generation of Truth Seekers like you.

I have asked all my Truth Seekers to keep a journal. I encourage each one to write their thoughts, events and ideas so as to preserve the story as close to the real events, thoughts and feelings as possible. I want history to remember us not just from my words but also from the words of my closest and dearest friends—even friends who have ended being my worst enemies.

Your mission is to share these events with other Truth Seekers. Keep the faith that ‘Good’ will prevail. We must stay united in mind and in actions. We must maintain our perseverance to save humanity and the world.

Harry Doubt

Part One

Seeking the Truth



Chapter 1

New York, 2008

COINCIDENCE? HARRY'S MOTHER always told him that there were no such things as coincidences. Only fools believed in that garbage.

This may have explained her erratic behaviour when his father, Aaron Doub, a respected quantum physicist, collapsed in front of them. A simple, impromptu after-work dinner party that his mother Bina was hosting at their home, turned into an unforgettable nightmare.

His father's last words were "We have the theoretical and experimental capabilities to build a time machine to the future. We have also discovered a scientifically feasible way to go back into the past..."

And suddenly, his father’s marble-brown eyes bulged out of their sockets, his mouth opened as if to finish the sentence, and then in slow motion Aaron fell forward, his face landing into the pile of whipped mashed potatoes on his plate. The glaring bald spot, which Aaron meticulously polished and combed over every morning, was all Harry could see from his end of the table. *What would Dad do if he had built his time machine earlier? Would he be here right now?* Harry glanced over his shoulder expecting to see an ‘Aaron Doub from the past’ standing in the shadows, observing the circus freak show unfolding in front of them.

His father’s colleague, Dr. Saeed Nariman, also a quantum physicist, lifted his father’s head from the plate while another guest helped wipe the mashed potatoes from his father’s face. They both carried his father and placed him on the floor. In a daze, Harry stood up and walked towards his father’s inert body. His mother was on the other side, waving her arms in the air, and wailing at the top of her lungs. “They killed him! They killed him!” she cried. *Who killed him?* Harry thought.

Thankfully, a young woman, the wife of one of the guests, guided his mother away. Meanwhile, Dr. Saeed performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on Aaron. Harry saw his father’s chest rise and fall with each breath of air Dr. Saeed blew into his mouth. Dr. Saeed stopped when he realized Harry was watching.

“Don’t just stand there, Harry! Call 9-1-1!” Dr. Saeed cried out.

HIS FATHER WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD an hour after they arrived at the hospital. Harry had been walking back from the cafeteria when he saw the surgeon talking with his mother and Dr. Saeed in the waiting room. Harry could read from the grim expression on the doctor's face that the news was going to break his mother's heart. "We found a small clot lodged in your husband's brain," the doctor said. "It caused hemorrhagic damage to the surrounding tissue. I'm sorry Ms. Schwartz...we did all we could."

His mother, Bina, pushed the doctor away, screaming, "No! It's not true!"

The doctor waved to a nearby nurse who ran to get help. His mother stepped forward and grabbed the doctor's scrubs with both hands. "He's not dead! What did you do to my Aaron?!" When he didn't respond, she turned wildly towards the other people in the waiting room. "They took my husband! Please help me!"

Although, Harry was used to his mother's over-dramatic displays of emotion, for a brief moment, something in her eyes had made Harry believe what she'd said. She had always been a passionate woman and her Israeli upbringing had made her skeptical of many things. Unfortunately, everyone else in the waiting room ignored his mother's pleas. And why wouldn't they? They'd probably assumed she was having a nervous breakdown.

Three nurses rushed back, grabbing hold of his mother's arms. "Let me go! Let me go!" She struggled as one of the nurses stabbed a needle into her arm.

"You need to relax, Bina," Dr. Saeed said in a soothing tone. He helped guide his mother down into a chair. "Everything will be just fine."

"Saeed, you need to find Aaron," my mother said, before passing out.

Harry had observed everything from a distance, not fully comprehending what was happening. *Funny how a tiny blood clot could bring a man as brilliant as Aaron Doub to his demise.*

Harry was only seventeen when his father died; a university senior writing his thesis, 'Mind-reading computers: intelligent assumptions of complex thought processes.'

Besides the fact that his father was an atheist and that his mother pretended to be one too, growing up in Harry's home had been anything but normal. The rare times Aaron had been home, Harry might as well have been invisible. Several times, Aaron had mistaken Harry for Dr. Saeed, rattling on and on about his theories, and asking what Harry's opinion was on the matter. When Harry tried to respond, eight times out of ten, his father would spin

around, shocked to hear Harry's voice and say, "You're not Saeed! Where is Saeed?"

Harry had to mentally accept the fact that he didn't really have a father.

Now that Aaron was dead, Harry didn't have to pretend anymore. A year later, Harry legally changed his last name to 'Doubt'.

Chapter 2

Bina Schwartz, Harry's mother

FOR YEARS BINA and Aaron tried to have a baby—honestly it was she who wanted it more than he did. When Bina couldn't conceive, she sought help from the best Israeli fertility specialists. When Aaron took the job at Global Nation University in New York City and uprooted them from their home in Tel Aviv, she hoped the change would help.

Her prayers were answered twelve months later when Harrell Doub was born. He was perfect. From his wavy brown hair, to his ice blue eyes and his chubby fingers and toes. Unfortunately, Aaron never cared much about the baby. He let Bina do all the parenting.

“Harry, you were born to do something memorable,” she often said to him. “You were meant to do great things.”

AFTER THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND, the strange dreams began. Many nights, Bina woke from her sleep with the dreams still clinging to her like the cobwebs that sprawled across the doorway of their garden shed. She started writing in her journal the details

she could remember. She kept the journal locked in her nightstand, safely hidden away.

Now that Aaron was gone, Harry was taking care of the household—buying groceries, preparing and cooking meals, and paying the bills. The inheritance money Aaron left for both of them was substantial...enough to bring all her long-lost in-laws out of the woodwork. Many of them travelled from Tel Aviv, bringing their high profile lawyers to claim their share of the inheritance, leaving Bina almost penniless.

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