

Books Cubed: Reads Interviews, & Raves Ep 6 Carrie Pack 30:50

Melissa Banczak
Carrie Pack

Melissa: Good adventures everybody! Welcome to Episode 6 of Books Cubed. Today, I have an interview with Carrie Pack and I think you're really gonna like it. She was a lot of fun to talk with. Let me just read you her quick bio, here: Carrie Pack is an author of books in multiple genres, including Designs on You from 2014, In the Present Tense in 2016 and Grrrls on the Side from 2017. She's a recipient of two Foreward Reviews INDIES Books of the Year Bronze awards -in 2016 for In the Present Tense, in Science Fiction and in 2017 for Grrrls on the Side, (Young Adult). Grrrls on the Side was also a finalist in the Bi Book Awards. Her novels focus on characters finding themselves in their own time -something she experienced for herself when she came out as bisexual in her 30s. She also hosts the Bi Sci Fi podcast and is the creator of the Bi Sci Fi Twitter chat. She's passionate about Science Fiction, Feminism and red lipstick. Carrie lives in Florida, or as she likes to call it, "America's Wang"
You're gonna like this interview with Carrie. Let me show you...
[Chewbacca Message Alert in background]
See? This is one of her books - In the Present Tense - and here's another one that I have, which is Past Imperfect .
She writes about my favorite genres, here. She's got time- travel, Science Fiction, unrequited love and fish out of water, so all this stuff is in her books... in these two books, and really great, a lot of fun. Let's just get right to the interview.

Okay, welcome, Carrie!

Carrie: Hi...this is my cat

Melissa: ...and friend ...who's that?

Carrie: This is Dave. He can't not be the center of attention.

Melissa: Oh, he's cute. He's cute! I was worried my daughter was kind of trying to come in here and join us; but she stayed in the other room with her chew toy.

I met Carrie in Jacksonville...?

Carrie: I think so... no, actually I think we met at a Florida Writers Association workshop and then reconnected.

Melissa: We did. It was a really good workshop. Lots of good authors there, though the book signings have been great for me to meet other authors and add to my growing pile of books beside my desk.

I think I've got, beside my bed, I think I have three dozen books and depending on my mood (it's like with my writing) depending on my mood ...it depends on what I'm reading that day.

So today, though, we're talking about your book - it's In the Present Tense- and you cover three of my absolute favorite things: time travel,unrequited love and fish-out-of-water. Tell everybody a little bit about your book.

Carrie: Sure. In the Present Tense came out, I think, two years ago,now. I just released the sequel to it and it's really about a young man who has a dissociative disorder. Instead of doing something like disconnecting from reality or experiencing a personality change- an alternate personality- he actually time travels within his own timeline. Miles has a lot of difficulty with that, because when his younger self shows up in his 25 year old body, he is wanting to reconnect with a high school boyfriend. His wife in the present is not really keen on that, for reasons we can all assume and so there's a struggle there for him trying to reconnect, obviously, with a high school sweetheart. Also at the same time, his adult self is trying to find a cure for what is causing him to time travel to make it stop and so there's a battle here for who gets control of the body, right? But also for who gets control of the heart and what happens and and how does that affect you – when. you know. you love someone with mental illness because his wife Anna has a point

of view in the book as does his ex-boyfriend Adam. They all have their own things to go through and one of the things that I did with them was, I looked at how each one of them would approach their life - being and loving someone with mental illness.

Melissa: I really liked that it goes back and forth. She has a little chapter that will tell you the year... the time and, I believe, the person ...so you know whose point of view we're looking at. I really like that I could see Miles' story from Anna's point of view and from Adam's point of view and from Miles' -in the different points in his life and the confusion and the frustration and the fear and the anger and all the things that enveloped all these characters as the story is going along and then as I'm getting through the book and I'm realizing that "Whew.. there's like a conspiracy kind of thing getting set up" I'm getting chills. I love that kind of thing. Oh my God, that's my fourth favorite thing! So I've been very excited because then it'll lead to the sequel...

Carrie: That's right.

Melissa: And, when did the sequel come out?

Carrie: It came out in August... August 9th, I believe. In that one, it basically picks up exactly where In the Present Tense left off. I mean, within moments at the end of that book it starts up again; but in this one I incorporated ...my cat's back there... I incorporated the point of view of a secondary character from In the Present Tense, of Bethany - who Miles meets when he's in treatment for his condition and she has her own struggles due to her own mental illness and she also can time travel and so I want it...I always fall in love with my secondary characters. I have no idea why; but I wanted her to have her own point of view and so I was able to revisit some moments from the first book from her point of view because of the time travel and also give her some time to really deal with the things because she has been wrapped up in the conspiracy and known about it since she was 12. Miles had been on the fringes of it- you find some things out about his life

and how involved in the conspiracy he was; but we know from the moment that he needs Bethany, that she's been living in a psychiatric facility for seven years at that point, so her life has been completely different and I think it's a good contrast to Miles, who has been able to live relatively a normal (whatever that means-normal) life without the burden of being institutionalized and so his fight to be not part of that versus hers is, I think, an important contrast because it's a different mentality of her having to, in the fight to save herself, throw away everything she's ever known.

Melissa: Oh I like that. I like that and will there be a third book in the series?

Carrie: I will never rule out revisiting these characters; but the story, as it stands, of Miles' condition and Bethany's condition -that has been wrapped up. I have toyed with, in my brain a little bit, of doing some prequel -like shorts about Bethany and about Miles and Adam because we don't know a lot about them before we meet them in the book so..

Melissa: .oh you know that might be good..... and I'm getting chills again. Time-travel is just my favorite thing. I just love it. That sounds really good. People, definitely check out her work. It's published... who's your publisher?

Carrie: I publish with a small independent boutique press called Interlude Press. They only publish LGBTQ titles that, you know, deal with positive stories for queer characters, so you don't have to worry about the "bury your gays" trope ever showing up. We have a lot of award-winning authors and bestsellers and things, there. It's a good group. They've published some really great stuff and I've been with them since my debut, so...

Melissa: Nice! And people can also find you on Amazon and other retailers?

Carrie: Yes, I'm on Amazon, Barnes and Noble... I mean basically, what a great thing about my publisher is they're really good with making sure that the books are accessible- so they're basically anywhere that you can buy ebooks. I'm there anywhere you can buy physical print books online. You can get them there and you can also get them directly from the publisher.

Melissa: Nice and um, I'm sorry...

Carrie: No, it's okay.
What's cool about that, what's nice, is when you preorder the print version of our books from them you get the free ebook with it. I know a lot of people prefer to read a book; but then like to have a physical copy on their shelf so that's always really handy if you pre-order.

Melissa: And, I will make sure that there are links in the show notes for everybody to find Carrie everywhere. One of the things that that I'm doing with my show is, all these authors get asked the same questions all the time so I started this last week. I found this wonderful site and if you are an interviewer or you need some interesting questions, I'll put the link in the show notes to these.

Carrie: I'm gonna steal them for my podcast.

Melissa: Yeah, I mean, they're great. They're great... please do! I need to send a note to the person that wrote the list so I can tell them that I'm using them. They invited people to use them. They have a list of 50 unusual, not very often asked, questions so I had Carrie pick out five questions and this will help us get to know her a little bit better. and okay [removes sticky note] so we did this one already. I gotta stop sticking stickies to the wall because you can hear it and eventually this will be a podcast and it's gonna annoy the heck out of my listeners- so I'm gonna tear this off really slowly...

What other authors are you friends with and how do they help you become a better writer?

Carrie:

I have a couple really close author friends and one of them I knew before we were authors and another I met because we were both aspiring and kind of on the upswing and getting our stuff published. First is an author by the name of Killian B. Brewer and he actually has been my dearest friend for probably, gosh, going on about 10 years now. We've known each other a really long time. Maybe not quite that long; but it's been awhile. He and I connected as fans of a television show. We got connected on Tumblr; but when our publisher started, they contacted the both of us about writing for them. His first book is a young adult title. If anyone's looking for something to give a young queer kid in their life- you know. from middle school age on up -probably a little bit on the younger side of it... it's a fairy tale retelling; but he wrote what happens when Prince Charming falls for Prince Charming and it is adorable. It's funny. It's so charming. It's called *The Rules of Ever After*, and he actually did a partnership with the Trevor... Project? Yes, the Trevor Project, where they did like a kind of like a match forum [?] and bought books for libraries to get more queer books in libraries. There was a little forward in there about how to contact them if, you know, kids were struggling - which I think is great because libraries are a great resource for queer kids who maybe don't have support at home. So he and I obviously have stayed friends. He's also written some adult stuff. He wrote *Lunch with the Do Nothings at the Tammy Dinette*. If you're a fan of Fannie Flagg ...that's Southern, charming, cute, like just small-town stuff. Adorable book. Love it. Great cover, too - one of my favorites and me and a couple other friends are trying to push him to write some more in that area.

My other really good author friend F.T. Lukens writes young adult Sci-fi and Fantasy and I actually connected with her because she submitted to my publisher and they asked me to read their slush pile for them. I was reading and I got hers and before I finished it I sent them, I said "you definitely want to talk to this author; but I'm gonna finish it first because I

really want to read it.” It was her first book, *The Star Host*, which she just wrapped up that trilogy. Just came out this month. I really, really love her stuff. Her book- this is a long title and I apologize-*The Rules and Regulations for Mediating Myths and Magic* is a standalone and it deals with a young kid who takes an internship with a person who is a mediator between the world of magic and myth and the real world. He gets into all kinds of crazy shenanigans. There's a stampeding unicorn on the cover of this book. It is hilarious. It's won a ton of award and I'm just so proud that I get to also be her friend. Also I tell her all the time I'm gonna claim I discovered her.

Melissa: Those all sound really good. I'll have you write them down for me, because my ears are crap. We'll put links to all those in the show notes and they do sound really good - especially that last one.

Okay, next question: What was the best money you ever spent as a writer?

Carrie: As a writer, the best money I ever spent actually was, uh, we just hooked up at this convention which was Indie Bookfest. I love conventions in general for motivating you to keep writing connecting with other authors and finding new readers; but what I love about Indie Bookfest is, it is such a welcoming community. This year was my second year attending as an author and the ladies that run it are just so welcoming. You know, they don't judge based on what it is you write or how new or how experienced you are. They treat everyone the same. There's a lot of camaraderie there. I've met so many great other authors who've been really supportive and what I love is that the whole focus of it is self-published, in other words, completely independent authors and small press indie authors -so it's all people who don't always get the exposure that the more traditionally published authors get. They have to work a lot harder to build readership because they don't immediately get put in bookstores and on library shelves, so it's a really great networking opportunity. A lot of great learning. If anyone's getting into self-publishing there's a

lot of great workshops involved in that and Indie Bookfest is every year in the Orlando area, so it's also really convenient for me.

Melissa: It was fantastic and Tamara who was on the show last week, if everything goes in the order that it should, she gave me a ticket to that so I was able to go to all of the panels and it was just tons of information. I got to meet the guys from Findaway Voices, who do my audiobook. They do distribution for my audiobook from my book. It was just wonderful and I ended up only... the first day of the show was all the panels and the second day was all the authors with their books and it was like an all-day thing and something happened and I couldn't get up there till like 45 minutes before it was closing and it was in a panicked rush, racing around the room looking for anything that looked like time travel or fish-out-of-water and I bought a huge stack of books that - normally I like to look through a book and read a couple paragraphs- I didn't even have that opportunity. I had to base everything on covers. So far, I've been really lucky. Everything's been excellent. And I met Erica and Erica - I don't have her card here -

Carrie: (unclear) ..Erica [muffled] Mason [?]

Melissa: Yes and I'm reading her short about the drag queen..

Carrie: Lala [?]

Melissa: Yes it's great. I keep meaning to send her an email to tell her "Hey! We need to reconnect!"

Carrie: Definitely, if you like kind of creepy type horror stuff, too, her short The Place is amazingly creepy.

Melissa: I bought it. It's on my Kindle; but it's like I've got maybe a hundred...

Carrie: I know. We bought... Do you see my "To Be Read"? I've read a lot of these; but also there's, like, I think up on that shelf there - I've read part of it. The other part's downstairs in my bedroom but yeah I've always got a "To Be Read" that's a mile long...

Melissa: There's just not enough books - I mean, there's not enough time, there's plenty of books- not enough time. Okay, next question: What are the common traps that you think are out there for new writers?

Carrie: Common traps for new writers? I think the biggest one is your own head. I think that for women and a lot of authors are women -especially independent authors, is the imposter syndrome. Thinking that you're not good enough. You don't know what you're doing and getting that book finished I think that's the biggest thing - at least it is for me. Other people have other issues; but I think that getting out of my own head and just forcing myself to sit down and crank out some words is the hardest thing. You know, you can always perfect a draft; but you can't do anything with a blank page. so I always think that the biggest thing when you're trying... you know you want to write. You know you have stories to tell; but getting it down on paper and having the confidence to finish it is the biggest trap, I think. Then, once you do that, trying to not apologize for asking people to read it or to buy it. Things are so ingrained in us to just apologize for being successful or for wanting to be successful and I think that allowing ourselves to ask people to support us... so those two things are the biggest is just and in that comes down to one thing which is knowing that you're worthy and knowing that you have a story to tell and that someone, somewhere will want to read it. And, it's okay to ask them to.

Melissa: Great, so you new writers... listen to her, she knows what she's talking about. Get your work out there. Get it onto paper. Show it to people and don't be afraid to say to people- especially your relatives, even- if you want it ,buy it. Don't give away too many copies of your book.

Carrie: Unless it's a big name author that really wants to read it and then send them a free copy, whatever format they want. If someone with a name says I'd love to read your book say "Can I send you a copy?"

Melissa: Yeah yeah can I drive it over and we can have coffee afterwards?

Carrie: Can I slip in a million dollars while we're at it? No, I'm kidding...

Melissa: Really ...really! so that's kinda bringing... you know the idea of people reading your work... brings us to next question: Do you read your reviews and how do you deal with what you see?

Carrie: I want to say no because you're not supposed to. My advice is don't read your reviews; but I will say, honestly, most of us read them, at some point. We read them we (muffled) them. You can't help but ...but I would say that the better thing would be if you are going to read your reviews to remember to take everything with a grain of salt. Even the good ones. Don't let the good ones go to your head and don't let the bad ones define you - because if someone hates your work that means that you made them feel something and that's not necessarily a bad thing. If someone loves your work, same thing, right? If they're indifferent about it to not want to leave a review then it just kind of didn't have an impact on them and then there's just people out there that are trolls. They just want to go in and one-star people's books and my thing would be stay off of Goodreads. Don't read your reviews on Goodreads because, for whatever reason, people get a burr in their butt about an author and one-star them for no reason but if you have to read reviews... if you are that person like me who has to know people are saying about you all the time if you get bad reviews that make you feel bad about your writing or yourself. My advice would be to then go read once in a while a review of your absolute favorite book of all time the one book that made you want to be a writer or made you want to read and read and read and not stop or go read classics that are beloved and are in school curriculums and that have been

called the best books of our time. They all have one-star reviews and there are people out there who hated those books. So, just because someone hates your book doesn't mean it's not good.

Melissa: That's a great idea to help remind you that yeah you're right there and you'll see reviews... one of the Facebook groups.. online I can't remember what it is but everybody whenever they hit the one star review Club they always post I got a one star review finally, and they will post what the person said and more times than not it's I couldn't download the book...

Carrie: Right... like that's the author's fault. My favorite one-star review was a friend of mine. Her pen name is [???] and she wrote a World War II historical gay romance between two men and one of them's in the Air Force. I believe. or the Army. I don't remember but he's a pilot and the characters' names are Ben and Pete and she got a one-star review from someone who won it in a Goodreads giveaway and then complained, "If I had known this was a gay book, I wouldn't have read it" and I'm, like, their names were Ben and Pete - what did you think it was? It wasn't like they had ambiguous names, you know? Ben and Pete - those are two guys ...

Melissa: Aw, yeah. That's definitely someone who enters every Goodreads...

Carrie: Yep. Regardless.

Melissa: ...regardless and doesn't look to see what the book is about. Yeah. I stay off Goodreads. I mean, I have a presence there but I really don't... I just don't have time, you know I took Facebook Messenger off my phone because I was spending too much time... I have Facebook on the computer, you know? I go to facebook.com and I can hook on that way; but most of my social presence is on Instagram. It's easy. You post a photo and that's it and you're done. You look at other people's photos and content [?] and I've made a lot of friends on Instagram.

I have a readers group and I have my professional group on Facebook; but you know it's gotten to where my once an evening and I'm done with my writing, I go and I look and I respond to anybody and I tell them what's going on and I just can't ...it's just too much of a time suck and I'm at a deadline. My next book was supposed to be to my editor on October 1st and it's October 19th. Oh my God! I'm gonna see her in like three weeks and I'm supposed to be bringing my book to her and it's gonna be ... hopefully I'm bringing it to her.

Which brings me to the next question and if you're like me, you have a bunch... so I think you have, what? Five published books?

Carrie: Four and well, close to the fifth one.

Melissa: ...close to fifth one, so: How many unpublished or half-written books are in drawers or on your computer somewhere?

Carrie: You know, honestly I have, I want to say like two and a half. There's one thing that I've been trying to... I'm gonna self pub this- because it's a novella and it's really niche. It's like a Horror Suspense Young Adult Christmas story -so it's like very niche, right? While I was working on another project for NaNoWriMo last year -I got a bug up my butt about this horror book and started writing it and wrote thirty thousand words in November of last year and have been spending the entire year procrastinating about finishing it. I wanted it done by this time this year, so after we get off this I'm going to be writing that and that's called The Lights and I am gonna talk about it everywhere. I was on another podcast last week and I talked about it, because here's the thing - I'm gonna have it out for Christmas this year. It's gonna be out. The Lights is what it's called and it's about this town having a Christmas lights festival every year and they switch to LEDs - and the LED lights possess the children and they start killing all the people in the town.

Melissa: Oh, that's fantastic! If you want to come back when it comes out and maybe read...

Carrie: Yeah.

Melissa: ... a small sample from it ...

Carrie: Sure!

Melissa: ...that would be fantastic because that sounds really great. I like horror and I love possessions...

Carrie: Yeah and my other one is actually a rewrite that I want to finish. I kind of thought I might try to adapt it and make it YA because I think the more I write the more I really want to shift myself into YA., a little more. I got kind of got stuck [garbled] doing the rewrite but it's a Historical and because in the late 1800s, the latter half of the 19th century, particularly, there was a lot of ... For people who weren't straight, there was a lot of opportunity for them to be in a relationship with someone of the same gender, because society was so split by gender. It would be actually more strange for a woman to be alone with a man than for two men to be alone together or two women. So I've had that one kind of percolating in the background for years. I really want to get that one taken care of, too but we'll see. And then I have one that has not even started. The next thing I am gonna start after I finish this horror that I have to get done, is a young adult story that's kind of like if you remember the movie You've Got Mail...

Melissa: Oh, yeah!

Carrie: ...it was based on The Shop Around the Corner, which is an old classic movie. Basically, two people are in love with each other as pen pals; but haven't met in real life and then meet each other in real life but don't know it's their pen pal. It's basically going to be two young guys who've just started college. They're Freshmen in college and that they've not really revealed a lot of personal information about each other; but have fallen in love over their mutual love of a TV show. They're now college suite mates. They're not in the

same room; but their rooms are attached. They share some common living space and they hate each other because it's basically an Odd Couple situation where one's a slob and one's really really neat and and they have totally different interests; but they're already in love with each other and don't know that's who they're in love with.

Melissa: I like that. Yeah, I like that. That sounds good. Do you have anything that you're gonna do for NaNoWriMo this year?

Carrie: Yeah. Hopefully the Horror will be done by then and I'll be able to start on that one I was just talking about, that young adult. I'm definitely doing NaNo, though. Got to do it.

Melissa: Yeah I think that I want to get the third book in my series done. I was having issues and I was sick for a while and then I told my husband "Oh my God, I have no B story" so I sat down and figured out the B story and then it went "Oh my God, the B story is already there and it naturally leads to the A story in book three" so it's all there. So I thought, "Okay I think that I can knock that off- a rough draft- in November , after I'm done. So the two weeks. Sometimes, for me, a rough draft is dialog...

Carrie: Yeah...

Melissa: ...then they do this, then they do that ...dialogue. I come from films so that's exactly how I wrote and I would write the dialogue and then and then they do this and dialogue so I could knock off you know a 60 page script in two or three days and then I just have to go back and do editing on the dialogue and everything is done out loud and all that to make sure the dialogue sounds good and doesn't sound stilted. Sounds like you've got a glut of good stuff and, definitely for the Christmas one or any of them...Come back when they're ready to come out and if you want to do a very short... you know just a couple paragraphs to get us enticed, that'll be fantastic. I also read on this podcast, sometimes.

I read my own works; but I thought it might be fun to have somebody else come on and get everybody a little excited about what they're working on...

Carrie: Glad to.

Melissa: ...and then have links in the show.

Thank you so much for coming this week to chat with us and this is the book - In the Present Tense and the sequel is Past Imperfect and there's two other books out there, too: Grrrls on the Side ...

Carrie: ...and Designs on You.

Great. so those all be the show notes the view links to all those Check them out. Read them. Don't forget to leave her a review. Be very nice because she may read the review.

Carrie: Even if it's a one-star, leave it. All reviews are good.

Melissa: If you can't download it from Amazon it's not her fault. Contact [muffled] Kelly [?]....

Thank you so much! Tell your Mom I said hi. Her mother's an author, also. She does Sweet Romance?

Carrie: Sweet Historical, yeah.

Melissa: Yes Sweet Historical... sorry and we're gonna have to do a show with the two of them together, because they are hysterical together. My coffee cup is sitting on one of her mother's coasters, so I think about her every time I sit down to work at my desk because there's her coaster

Carrie: Aw.. she'll love that.

So, thank you and that's it for this week. I'll wrap this up in the show notes in just a sec and thank you for coming along and hang on for just a second after we end this.

So...massive interview fail. I forgot to ask her why she refers to Florida as "America's Wang" - so she has to come back, now so I can ask her that and I guess I need to do better sticky notes on the walls and that's it for this week and I come back next week. I have Rosie Zwaduk, who is the voice of June Nash in the audio books. She's fun and you'll get to meet her. It's always fun to put a face to a voice.

See you next week and, in the meantime, go read a good book!