

Sabrina Hi friends! Welcome to episode 7 of LitTea! I'm your host, Sabrina Lotfi, and today is double awesome because I have two guests—Carrie McCrossen and Ian McWethy, co-authors of *Margot Mertz Takes It Down* and *Margot Mertz For the Win*, which comes out November 15th. And we even get a special cameo with their newborn.

Carrie Hi.

Ian Hi.

Carrie Hi. Thanks so much for having us.

Ian Yeah, thank you.

Sabrina Oh, my gosh, thank you for joining me. I'm so excited about this. And, this is gonna be a really fun one because we have co-authors. This is my first time recording two people with me, so this is gonna be really fun on the audio.

[All laugh.]

Ian Well, we've been through couples counseling for many years, so I promise we won't - we know how to communicate with each other.

Carrie We'll try not to fight, yeah.

Sabrina I love it. Okay, so what book made each of you a reader? And, y'all can fight over who goes first on any of these.

Carrie Good. A chance for us to fight. A reader? I don't know.

Ian Oh, boy. All right. Sadly, I was not, like, a huge reader when I was probably in middle school and high school, and that's when I sort of got really creative. It just - for whatever reason- I had maybe undiagnosed ADHD. There were some books I loved, but I did - I had a hard time getting through a lot of books in English, and they always felt like they're way over my head. But, I did love theater and movies, and the one theatrical piece I remember really opened my mind was *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner. I saw that and it was sort of like, 'Oh, this is what art could be.' It could be relatable, but also explore all these really intense issues. And, half of it was over my head, but enough of it I got. And, it was so powerful that it made me want to be a creative person, and definitely inspired me as a writer.

Carrie That's a great answer. I was gonna say *Candide*, which is kind of like, but I think maybe that's too late. I'm trying to think about a book that I read when I was, like, really little that really made me a reader, because I think there were probably many. And, now that we have kids, and we're reading all this really wonderful children's literature, I'm like, 'Oh, there's probably so many great books like that, or poems, or things that I sort of, like, loved as a kid, and would commit to memory.' But, *Candide* was the one that I read that was like - it was a classic. And, I read a version that was annotated so I could understand a lot more of it when I was in high school, and I was like, 'This is funny! This is, like, wild and funny and cuckoo.' And, I think that made me, like, kind of opened my eyes. I was like, 'Wait, classics can be kind of, you know, ballsy and funny,' I guess. So, I think that kind of made me want to read more. Yeah, these are weird answers. I'm sorry.

[Ian laughs.]

Sabrina No, they're great answers. I mean, you had such an unusual path to publication, so those actually make perfect sense, like looking at your journey. You both write plays, right? You're a comedian, right Carrie?

Ian Yeah.

Carrie Yeah, technically.

Ian Yeah, and I write plays and screenplays. And, just to be clear, I am a reader now. I blossomed in my late twenties. I was a late bloomer. And, I love it. And, I wish I had more time to read more books.

Sabrina I know. My TBR is so long. It just gets longer, well, probably weekly. Most of the releases are on Tuesdays, so it gets longer weekly. Sometimes daily, when they decide to throw stuff at us.

Ian Yeah, I mean, I wish I looked back at my youth and I was like, 'Why couldn't I have been that kid who just had books in his bag all the time?' And, I would die for that time to be able to just sit and read all day.

Carrie Yeah, I did all the compulsory reading. If it was assigned, I read every damn page of it. And, I had this thing that, too, that I had to, like, finish a book. Like, I felt like I had to finish a book even if I didn't love it. And, then only as an adult, a friend who was very literary said, 'Why are you still reading this? You've been complaining about this book and how you can't get through it and how much you dislike it.' And, I won't say the name of it, it's a very popular book. And, she was like, 'Just don't read it. You don't have to finish it.' And, I was like, 'Oh, I don't have to. This isn't assigned. I'm an adult. I don't have to finish this book that I don't like.' So, now I have more freedom.

Sabrina How did you each get into writing?

Ian I guess I started in high school and it was more like - started out writing more sketches. I was kind of into comedy then. And, then I tried to write a play with a friend, and the first, a lot of stuff I wrote, and then I sort of tried to screenplay, and that I did with a friend for a long time until I got into college.

Sabrina Can you pause really quick? What is a sketch?

Ian Oh, I'm sorry. Or a skit, like a Saturday Night Live, a comedy sketch.

Sabrina A skit. Okay.

Carrie Usually comedians call them sketches, so if you're like writing one for SNL or something, they call that a sketch and not a skit.

Sabrina Oh, okay.

Ian Yeah, but that's where it started. And, then I was also an actor. I went to school for acting, so I was trying to do both for a long time, and I did both for about eight years. And, then writing just sort of won, I guess, in terms of what I wanted to spend more time doing.

Carrie More like, acting lost.

Ian Like acting kind of lost. And, writing I don't know... When I was starting to write, I found it frustrating that I didn't have enough time to really do enough world building. I felt like I was always just like, barely getting plays or scripts out, and I wanted to have more time to really focus on it. So, then I did. And, I also got interested in other things. I got - a manager wanted me to write screenplays, and I was still writing plays, and I was trying to find time to do both, and I just decided to commit and do it full time. Yeah.

Carrie My path was a little different. I didn't start until later. We met in college. I was acting, only acting, and I was always interested in the literary side of things, and I was trying to kind of double major in dramaturgy. And, I loved just like, digging into texts, and figuring out how they worked, and helping to develop them, and helping to research them - all of that. And so I worked with Ian on a lot of his earlier scripts, and I would be frustrated when he wouldn't take my advice. It took me a really long time to realize, 'Oh, I should write my own stuff where I can make the decisions.' And, so, yeah, I think I also started more through sketch and through theater, I would say. Right, more sketch? And, then I was doing - it was a combination. I saw how wonderful Ian's career was flourishing, and how he was able to finish stuff. Whereas, I didn't always finish creative pursuits until I witnessed Ian and how good he was at doing just that. So, that was part of it. And, then also, I just got really into improv comedy and I was like, 'Oh, if I can make it up on my feet, I might as well just write some of this down.'

Sabrina If you have the time to think about it, yeah.

Carrie Yeah, so I started just kind of thinking of myself as creative in a different way than just acting. And, that wasn't until like, later, my late twenties. And, then yeah, and then I got kind of sucked into different projects, and then now I'm here.

Sabrina So, acting and script writing, they're both such really great studies in emotion and dialogue.

Carrie Yeah. And, character. And, I would say we both come from that background. And, I think the dialogue is always one of our favorite parts to write. And, I know that's not true for some authors. And, I think it's so interesting because to me that comes naturally.

Ian Yeah. For a long time I could only like, dialogue was something that always came naturally and I really struggled with any sort of prose. So like, stage direction or action. And screenplays, I'd write like, the simplest line possible, because my brain could not figure out...

Carrie Sometimes you'd write things that didn't make any sense at all.

Ian And, it took like, I don't know, like ten years to really - because eventually I had to start writing treatments. So, for like, screenplays or TV pilots, you have to write a summary. And, that basically is sort of prosy writing. And, it was so hard, but I had to do it.

Carrie And, you've gotten so good at it now. I can say that because I've seen how bad you were in the beginning.

Ian And, now I actually enjoy it. But it really did take - like I mean - it took like a decade because it was not something, like I've never had a great sense of grammar. I'm one of those people that people get really frustrated by because I put the comma in the wrong place, or I use the wrong homonym.

Carrie Homophone. I can attest to it.

Ian There we go.

Carrie He's loose with his grammar.

Sabrina That's what copy editors are for. It's fine.

[All laugh.]

Ian No, but I mean, I really went from, like, unintelligible some of the stuff I would write to, like, to the point where it's at least like, 'Oh, I have a voice and it's, you know, it's coherent.'

Carrie No, I didn't think that a grown person could improve that much. Like, I thought you'd be locked in, but you've gotten so much better. Even his grammar is so much better now.

Ian Yeah. Which is a good lesson to any writer. If there's something you're not good at, you can get better at it. You just have to keep at it.

Carrie I don't mean to be snotty about it, because I do have better grammar and spelling and all of that kind of stuff. I just know that that's one of my strengths. It's not the most important strength because, as you said, there are copy editors. But I do think yeah, that's what I bring to the table. General knowledge of the English language.

Ian Well, among many things, along with creativity and voice. No, you do everything I can do, but also...

Sabrina Y'all are so cute! They're hugging right now. I just want everyone to know that. That's a really good point. I like how you said that you weren't very good at it, and then you were kind of forced into having to work at it, even though it wasn't necessarily something you maybe wanted to do. And, then because you were forced into it, you just kept working at it, and kept working at it, and kept working at it.

Carrie Well, I think you have questions about this later, but when you talk about pitching your story or pitching your book. That's a little bit what Ian is talking about. Like, writing a sample and choosing the best sample, and writing a synopsis that tells what's gonna happen in your book, or even just like the cover letter to your agent. Those are the things that can make us roll our eyes. And, it feels like, 'Well, that's not the work.' But it's an important part of the work, and you do have to be good at that. In addition to writing the best novel or writing the best feature film or whatever, that other stuff is all important, so you might as well improve and focus on that, too.

Sabrina And, they all build different writing muscles too.

Ian Yeah, totally.

Carrie Yeah, I think that's true too. And, that's the best thing, too, if you can appreciate that, because I think instead of seeing it as a burden or a part of a hurdle that you have to get through in the process. You're absolutely right. Like, it's something that develops a different skill that you might have. Just really punchy writing. A really punchy copy is important, and you can use that in your novel, too.

Sabrina Would y'all like to share some hobbies or interests y'all have outside of reading and writing and, like, script writing?

[Ian and Carrie laugh.]

Carrie Right now, so we have two children who are in diapers. Really. One of them is coming out of diapers right now.

Sabrina So, you're potty training.

Carrie Yeah. So, we don't have tons of hobbies.

Ian Unfortunately.

Carrie We spend time with the kids. I mean, it's like a hobby. It's, like, fun.

Ian Yeah. I mean, it's a little kid focused. I mean, hobbies. I guess before kids.

Carrie We can say hobbies before kids. Well, actually, we've been doing puzzles. If we have, like, 20 minutes, we'll do The New York Times crossword or the Spelling B game.

Sabrina That's fun. And, those get you out of the writing mindset, it does get you away from the kids a little bit. That's a hobby. That's an interest. It totally counts.

 [Ian laughs.]

Carrie We feel like it does. Yes.

Sabrina Oh, my gosh. I do puzzles.

Carrie I love a puzzle. That's the other thing is we've been very Covid cautious, so we haven't really gone anywhere. But we like to hike or, like, go for a walk. We live in LA. So, we can, like, hike.

Ian If we have the time, we like yoga.

Carrie I haven't done yoga in a long time. It feels unfair to claim it as a hobby. I run on the treadmill. Is there anything else that we do? Cooking. You really like to cook.

Ian I like to cook, but yeah, I don't - I would like to have time to make newer stuff. I like doing that.

Carrie Now it's just about getting dinner on the table. This is sad. This is a sad answer to your question.

 [Ian laughs.]

Sabrina It's really not.

Carrie In the before times, we liked to travel and stuff, but yeah.

Sabrina Y'all want to do some querying and publishing questions?

Ian Yeah, please.

Sabrina Okay. So, I'm gonna let you just go on this one, because I have no idea what's involved in this. So, y'all had a really unique path to getting your book published. So walk us through that. From conception of Margot, to on shelves.

Carrie Yeah, it's a weird one.

Ian Yeah, it's a weird one. And, I will say before we start, just because now I'm worried that Booktok may hate us for seeming like we had no interest in books and we got a publisher.

Carrie I know, we're like the other author that you were saying.

Ian I will say, in my late blooming, reading and enjoying books and literature of all kinds, I had sort of a plan that I was like, 'Maybe in five years.' I was starting to read more. Partly because maybe I could do a book proposal. Maybe I could write a YA book, because I write a lot of plays that get done in schools, and they do well there. So, someone sort of suggested they were like, 'Maybe you could pitch like a YA book.' And, at that point, I was like, 'I really don't know that market at all.' So, I started to read more and I enjoyed it, but I thought it was like, a few years away. I was like, 'I really need to bone up and understand this genre and understand this world and how it's done.' So, I was primarily writing plays and screenplays, and we would write plays together occasionally. So, this first started as a screenplay. There was a company that wanted books that were set in high school.

Carrie Wanted movies set in high school. They had, like some kind of...

Ian I said books. Yeah, they wanted movies that were set in high school. So, together we wrote a one page pitch that was basically *Margot Mertz*.

Sabrina Is it just a pitch of overall, or is it like full story, like beginning to end pitch? Like a synopsis?

Carrie Pretty much like a one page synopsis, didn't go into tons of detail, obviously.

Sabrina I mean, it's a page.

Carrie There weren't secondary characters.

Ian Yeah, it was pretty much like Margot Mertz. This is her job. She's a fixer. She's awesome. She's kind of like these characters. And, then she finds this revenge porn site at her school and she vows to take it down.

Carrie That's true, because I guess it doesn't go all the way to the end. That first one page version of it didn't really say what happened after that. So, it's really more of like a setup of the conceit of the whole project.

Sabrina Okay, cool.

Ian So, that is very punchy. We tried to make it funny and voicy. Sent it off to this company, and they basically never read it. So, then it sat in my hard drive for two years. And, then I had a meeting with Temple Hill, which is a production company that did a lot of YA adaptations. They did *Twilight*. They did *The Maze Runner*. They did all of John Green stuff. *Love, Simon*, among other things.

Carrie Many many things.

Sabrina They've done a few things that people have heard about.

Ian Yeah. So, I went in there pitching a TV show that was not related at all, and I mentioned that.

Carrie Which they passed on.

Ian Yeah, which they also passed on.

Carrie Wow our story is sad.

Ian (Laughs) This is like the tip of the iceberg for the stuff that has gotten passed on.

Carrie Oh, you have no idea.

Ian Mountains of failure and things that have not worked out. So, please tell that to Booktok.

Carrie We want pity, really.

Ian So, anyway, I was pitching a book, and at the beginning of the meeting, they were just like, 'What do you do?' And, I was like, 'Oh, I'm a playwright, and I've written all these plays that get done at schools.' And, she said, 'Oh, that's interesting, because we're starting an imprint and we have a relationship with HarperCollins.'

Carrie I don't know if they're an imprint.

Ian That's what she said at the time. That's not really right.

Carrie They were starting, like, an arm of their company that's a publishing arm.

Ian And, she said, 'If you have any ideas that could maybe be turned into a YA book, pitch it to us and maybe we could help you develop it into a book.' And, I thought, 'Well, I'm sort of interested in that, and sure, I might have some ideas.' So, I basically then went back and I took that idea and I pitched a couple other...

Carrie You pitched, like, three ideas...

Ian That were supposed to be movies.

Carrie They were all ideas he had come up with on his own. And, then *Margot Mertz* we had worked on a little bit together, so my name got attached there. And, then that was the one that they liked. They were like, 'We like *Margot Mertz*.'

Ian Yeah. Not thinking. I told Carrie, I was like, 'Can I turn this in? We'd write it together. But I don't even know if they're gonna pick it.' And, Carrie is just, like, very open. I mean, she's always like, 'Yes! I'm, like, down to try stuff. Let's see where this leads.' So, I sent it into Alli, who was the head of development for this book writing branch of Temple Hill, and she said, 'Yeah, I like this one idea. Let's develop it a little more. Could you expand it to, like, five pages?' And, we thought, yeah...

Carrie It was really smart and what. So, we love Alli. Her name's Alli Dyer, and she's wonderful. She's the head of publishing at Temple Hill. She was smart in that she asked us to write, like, a five page synopsis. So, we did that, and then she was like, 'Okay, let's expand this to, like, a full', and I think it was like 20 pages at the time it was done. So, like, a full synopsis of the entire book that, you know, covers everything.

Sabrina Wow! Okay.

Carrie So, 20 pages or so. And, it was very voicey and included everything as we saw it happening. And, she's like, 'You know, and we'll also want to have a sample, since you are new writers,' and she's like, 'Why don't you write the first chapter or the first three chapters'...

Ian I think she was like, 'Write like, one or two' to see if we can give them a sample.

Carrie So, we did that, and we thought we were done. We were like, 'Oh, okay. She asked us for three chapters, and she read those.' And, I think she was just kind of, like, testing us to see if we could write a book, or write anything. So, she read those and she liked those, and then she said, 'Okay, I think in order to go out to publishers, we probably need, like, eight chapters.' And, we were like, okay, so we wrote the rest.

Ian Yeah. So, if she from the beginning was...

Sabrina How many chapters is *Margot*? Do y'all remember?

Carrie I think it's like 26.

Ian Yes, 27 something...

Carrie It's too long. It's many pages.

Sabrina That's almost - I mean, it's not quite there, but that's almost half. Wow. Okay.

Carrie Yeah. It was like, easily a third of the book.

Ian So, Alli, if she had told us from the beginning, was like, 'You need to write a 20 page synopsis and a third of the book,' we probably would have been like, 'That's too much time to commit to this.' But, by the time we'd written three chapters, we're like, 'Well, we've already done it. Let's suck it up and do it.'

Carrie Yeah. Only because we really had no idea that this would ever go anywhere. We didn't feel like we were like, yeah. So, it was only because we had felt like we'd sunk in so much at that point that we were like, 'Well, we might as well write the rest.' But Alli kind of functioned in that stage, so we did not have an agent. So, she was kind of functioning creatively, like an agent might.

Ian Or, an editor, too. She'd give us creative notes.

Carrie She gave us fantastic notes. We could bounce ideas off of her. Whenever we were undecided about something, she would be the tiebreaker. So, she was kind of helping us through that phase of the project. And, then right before our son was born, we finished that, and we went out to publishers with it.

Ian Well, first we had this first look deal with HarperCollins, and they passed. And, at the time, we were like, 'Oh, my god.'

Carrie We thought that was our only option.

Ian Like, we'd spent all this time on it, and they passed. And, she was like, 'That's okay, now we can actually send it out to everybody.'

Carrie Wider, yeah.

Ian Which ended up being a blessing, because if HarperCollins took it, they would have had their first - they would have offered a lot less.

Carrie Probably. Yeah. It ended up going to auction. There were three publishers that were interested. We went with Penguin. It was Philomel at the time, but now they've moved us to Viking. So, it's Viking, but still Penguin. Yeah.

Ian Yeah. And then, all the publishers, when we were talking to them, they're like, 'So, it could be a series, right?' We're like, 'Yeah,' we thought it could also be a TV show. We thought it's sort of structured that it would have a different case for different books. And, they're like, 'So, would you mind writing two?' And, we're like, 'I guess.'

Carrie Yeah, the deals came in for two. And, we were like, 'What?'

Ian We have no idea what the second book...

Carrie We were like, 'We've never written one book. Are you sure about this?'

Ian Yeah. And, we had no idea what the second book would be, but we were like, 'Yeah, okay.'

Sabrina Did you know it would be a *Margot* book?

Carrie We always wanted *Margot* to be like a series. We had more stories for - well, I guess maybe not the very beginning, because at the very beginning we saw it as a movie, but I think there was always more potential for *Margot*, so we always knew there were ideas for a second book, but we felt very untested, and we were surprised that anybody would want more from us. So, then Temple Hill had their own agent who, I guess kind of, like, did the deal for us. But I will say, like, we're very, like, new to this whole thing. And, I think that there were a lot of things we were surprised by getting a deal and being like, 'Oh, this is the deal.' And, we didn't really have - you know - we eventually got an entertainment lawyer involved. And, I think, like, for our next book, we would want to have an agent involved that was representing solely just us, and not this other entity.

Ian Yeah, it's sort of a strange deal where they co-own the book.

Carrie So, it's complicated. [Ian laughs.] But that is such a weird path. And, I don't know - I don't think that we would have had anybody - I don't think anyone would have read our sample. I don't think we could have gotten in the door without having the help of Temple Hill on this project. And, they really did. They got everybody to read it and yeah, so it worked out great for us, so...

Sabrina Well, I'm so glad it did.

Carrie Yeah.

Sabrina That's so cool. That's so unique. I learned so much in that. And, it is a really interesting path. But, I'm gonna say this for everybody. Everybody has a different path to getting their books published. Everybody's path is different. There's no two - There might be two that are, like, really similar, but they're all different. We're all on our own journeys.

Carrie The idea - something that they said - that an acting teacher said to me is - and I think it's the same for writers - is it's your job to be ready. So, it's your job to have your craft, and just be ready to go on the random day that you get the audition, or the random day that they call you. And then, writing is kind of the same way. Like, it's our job to generate ideas and have them be ready. So, when someone does ask to read your stuff, or when you do get an opportunity, like this opportunity to just share potential book ideas or whatever, you have stuff that's ready to go because you've been working and developing and you have these ideas and you have stories to tell.

Ian And, also to be open. Any success I've had has just been like, 'Well, I'll give it a try.' And, there have been so many things where it hasn't worked out or I've had a specific plan where I'm like, 'I'm gonna do this and it's gonna get into this festival, and then I'm gonna get an agent.' And, those have, like, not worked out.

Carrie It's always a surprise.

Ian So, even if... it's good to question yourself, like, if someone comes to you and is like, 'Hey, would you like to try writing this?' And, it may be a short story in a genre that you didn't think you would apply to, like, as long as you don't hate it. If you're like, 'I don't know, let me try.' It's a challenge. You don't know where it could lead.

Carrie Yeah.

Sabrina A little bit ago, you were both like, 'You don't hate us.' But the thing is, you actually had - you put the work in and you succeeded. You had plenty of opportunities to actually fail at any of those steps, really, if you think about it. I mean, they could have gotten the first little thing and been like, 'No.' They could have gotten the ten page or 20 page synopsis and been like, 'uh-uh,' you know? They could have seen chapters one and two and been like, 'Y'all can't write.'

Carrie And, we did try very hard. You know, we really wanted the synopsis to feel like - because it's not written in Margot's voice, but we wanted you to get a sense of our voice and Margot's voice from that. So, we did really try.

Sabrina Yeah. No, y'all put in the work. Y'all did all the things. You're good. [Carrie and Ian laugh.] Okay. So, you kind of worked with your agent as you...well, from conception, basically. And, then again, you had an editor once you got published. So, how did revisions work with both of them? Like, were you sending chunks to them? Like, the first one, once you got past that eight chapter mark?

Carrie Yeah. So, yeah, before the eight chapter mark... Alli's notes are great. They tended to be a little bit more general. She might say, like, 'You need more...you need to show this part more actively.' A lot of times it was like, 'Make this more active.' But then yeah, once we started working with Kelsey at Penguin, who is our editor, then the notes got more... Also, that's why we ended up at Penguin. We thought Kelsey's notes, when we were in the auctions phase, Kelsey's notes were really, like, intense and scary and strong, and we thought that she would be the one to help us really elevate the book and push us to go even further than we were already. Yeah. So, let's think. We always wanted to show everybody an outline, and I guess they weighed in on the outlines a little bit, but more so once we started writing. And, then yeah.

Ian Yeah. We would send chunks, I think. Was it like the first half and the second half? I think that's what we did.

Carrie Yeah. They were big chunks of the book. It was like the whole first half.

Ian So, it would be like the first half, and then it would be like, yeah, just tons of notes on everything from...

Carrie From like, really nitty gritty. Like, 'You could just cut this line' or this whatever, to being like, 'Should this character...'

Ian Yeah, 'This character does not make a lot of sense.'

Carrie In the second book, they told us to cut a character, and we didn't. But... we pushed back on that one. Yeah, Nick. And, they ended up loving him. We just figured we got to the note behind the notes.

[Ian laughs.]

Ian Yeah. There would be a lot of stuff that was like big story notes. I felt like with both books, we'd always have a lot of Avery notes. Avery was the one where we really had to keep coming back.

Carrie Can we pause for a second? I'm hearing a crying baby in the background. So I feel like you're gonna not want that on our audio.

Sabrin Oh, it's fine, but yes, check your baby.

Carrie Let me just double check that. Oh, I just heard the door.

Ian You want me to go? You're on headphones.

Carrie I think my mom just came in.

Ian I think she took her.

Carrie Okay. So, we should be okay. Yeah. So, yeah, I think you were about to say that. Every time we got notes on the first half, we felt like our lives were over and that we were like, 'How will we ever fix this?' They were always like, a little - they were good. We were like, 'I agree with this, but how the hell am I gonna implement all of this?'

Sabrina This was your first big book project, and y'all went from zero to fully on shelves in one project. Y'all had a lot of learning, I'm sure, like, you were figuring out how to work with each other, figuring out how to revise, figuring out how to - and you already had some of that experience, I'm sure, with the script writing and everything.

Carrie Yeah, we've gotten network notes before.

Sabrina And, you understand story. Actually, TV and movies and plays are some of my favorite examples of story, actually. I love them for research. They're so good. They have such good arcs and complete. I love movies, for both examples of looking at character arcs, and plot arcs, and everything.

Carrie Yes. When they're well done. Yes, absolutely.

Ian Yeah. So, we had a lot of experience with character and story, but it was just like a new medium. And, to me, writing a book was always the Everest of writing, which was why I had sort of like a five year plan. I was like, 'I need to exercise and work out and get to it,'

Carrie Whereas I never thought about climbing Everest.

Ian And then, two years into my plan, they were like, ‘No, just do it. Like sprint and get up the mountain as fast as you can.’

Sabrina Like, you did it. You got there.

Carrie That was part of it, too. We also had a new baby, and then Covid happened when we were finishing some of our revisions on the first book. And, that was very hard. We're just, like, trading pages back and forth, trading our son back and forth, and scrubbing our groceries.

Ian So, we're amazed, like anybody read it and that it was legible. I mean, it really feels like a fever dream that we got it done. It happened.

Carrie But anyway, we actually love notes, and we give each other notes, too. I know that you have a question about this, but to talk a little bit about our process. We are...

Sabrina I was about to jump in and jump into that. Yes. Go.

Carrie Yeah. We are, I think, very used to - maybe - I don't know if it's because we come from a theater background, but I think we're used to getting notes and collaborating, and being open to that. I especially like... I prefer writing with other people. I love getting feedback. And, so how we, like, work during the week is, generally speaking, once we have an outline, which we spend a lot of time going over and fine tuning outlines together, to make sure we really understand exactly what each moment is supposed to be, then we divide it up by chapters we write. Like, if our week starts on Monday, on Monday, and probably Monday and Tuesday, we will each go off and write a chapter, get it to where we want it.

Sabrina Different chapters, or are you all tackling the same one?

Carrie Different chapters. Oh, no, that would be a disaster.

Sabrina I know. I'm like, ‘How do you do this?’

Carrie We each write the same chapter and only one can win. No, we each write a different chapter.

Sabrina Then you just alternate everything.

[Carrie and Ian laugh.]

Carrie Like that theater game where you finish a different story, finish the story one word at a time. We each write a chapter, and then by, like, Wednesday, we trade those chapters, read each other's, and then we have a meeting, usually, like, after that or Thursday, to say, like, 'These are the things that I would like to change. This is why, these are the things that weren't working for me in your chapter, and these are the things that were working, and these are the things that I really loved. And I want to keep this, or I want to move it to a different chapter, or whatever. We give notes on Wednesday and then we would take each other - trade and take each other's, and rewrite it on Thursday and Friday.

Sabrina Would it be like a full rewrite or like a heavy edit?

Carrie It really depends on the chapter. So ideally, it should be like a mild, small, you're tweaking things and then we're done by Friday, and then we have a weekend to spend with our children. But, what usually happens is we're rewriting, trading back and forth, rewriting, trading back and forth until, like, Sunday night when we're like, 'We have to finish this because we have to start our next chapters on Monday.' So, that happened a lot. You know what? And, it was always indicative of, like, when that would happen, there was a reason. There was something that we didn't iron out when we were talking about the outline, or there was something we were not on the same page about, or whatever it was. And, I am convinced that it always makes the book better, but sometimes it just took longer. Other times, like, it would be an easy chapter and I'd be like, 'I love it. I have only minor changes' and like, we would be done by Friday.

Ian It felt like that was rare most of the time.

Carrie It was rare. Well, it's hard to say because I would say it was only after we got *Margot Mertz* sold that we settled into a routine. And, then I think there were weeks that went pretty smoothly with the first book. The second book was so rushed that I do think we were doing more in the week to week rewriting phase than we... I think if we'd had more time to outline and really think everything through, that we would have had - our jobs would have been easier week to week. But, you know...

Sabrina So, in the second book, y'all were kind of thinking ahead and planning the rest of it as you went, as opposed to having the full synopsis planned out?

We always outline at first. We always have the synopsis planned, but changes happen as you go, and you realize, like, 'Oh, I need, like, this chapter shouldn't be here. This character has to realize X, Y, or Z sooner, or whatever. And so, when you start to make changes like that, or when we think the problem is... We think we're on the same page about something that's been outlined, and then the other person writes it, and you're like, 'That is not how I imagine that going down. I thought we were on the same page, but I thought they were gonna be like, I thought this was more of an argument. I thought this was more of a whatever.' And, then we have to kind of, like, duke it out and find a compromise or something that works for both of us.

Ian And we got...

Carrie But, there is an outline. That's the deceptive part of it. We thought we agreed upon it going in, and that's why we can sometimes be like, 'What the hell happened?'

Sabrina Okay. I mean, that's the difference between an outline versus a full book. There's a lot that can go - be interpreted in those little sentences.

Ian I think we got better because we'd take our outline and we'd sort of break it down into chapters, and then we sort of realized, like, sometimes the chapter would be like two sentences, and it's like, in theory, should fill up, but it's like we just didn't write it all out. And, then we got better at being like, 'Okay, we have to write this all out.'

Carrie We have to figure out exactly what is happening.

Ian And, then we got better at our Wednesday meeting.

Carrie There was no Wednesday meeting at the beginning. Well, sorry. No, go ahead.

Ian That's all right. Go ahead, do the Wednesday meeting.

Carrie We didn't used to have a Wednesday meeting. We used to just trade chapters and just dive in and start rewriting the other person's work. And, then we would be like, 'Why did you change that?' And, then we would have hurt feelings.

Ian Yeah. Or it'd be really brief. It'd be like, 'Yeah, I just want to change these couple of things.' And, then I would do this more, I think, and then I would turn in a whole new chapter.

Carrie He would turn in a completely new chapter.

Ian And then she'd be like, 'What the hell?'

Sabrina 'Where's my chapter?'

Carrie I know. Yeah.

Ian I did get better at saying what I was gonna change. Why exactly? I think we both got better at that. And, also...

Carrie I think if you work with someone for a long time and, God forbid, are married to that person, it can be very easy to just be like, 'Well, I'm changing this because it was bad,' or like, 'I'm just changing this.' Like, 'It'll be better, trust me,' or whatever. But, we actually do have to be kind to each other, and remember to be kind to each other throughout the collaboration. So, we need to say, like... like, it's funny. Ian knows I love him, and, like, we have children together, we have a life together, but I still need to take the time to be like, 'Hey, I laughed out loud when I read blah, blah, blah.' And, that goes a long way for me to be like, 'Yeah, I have to change the next two paragraphs because I thought it was confusing, or I thought it should come later, or whatever,' but just telling him the parts that I loved is a lot of goodwill and reminds him, and same for me. I have an ego that definitely needs to be massaged.

Ian I mean, we all do. And, it's just good to remember, especially when you're in a time crunch, there's a tendency to just sort of be like, 'Well, that works. Let's not focus on that. Let's dive into the other stuff.' And, really to be like, take time to be like, 'That stuff was great, and this is why.'

Sabrina It can be. It can be really hard to take just critiques that need to be fixed.

Carrie Yeah.

Sabrina It's also really helpful to hear what's working well, I think.

Ian Yeah, totally.

Carrie Yeah. And, just to feel like you want to feel stoked about your, you know, to get up and write again tomorrow. You want to feel that your project has good parts to it.

Ian Yeah, yeah.

Sabrina So, y'all really grew into writing with each other, and it sounds like y'all have improved your communication together a lot as well, through the process.

Ian Yeah.

Carrie We really have. We tried to write something together, before we went to couple's counseling, and we never finished it. It was not good. And, then we went to counseling, and then we started working together very, like, well, I would say. And, then we got the book, and then we really had to level up in our communication.

Ian Yeah. The short plays we wrote were structured so we could really write different parts, and it wasn't...

Carrie I was thinking about the Lifetime movies, though, too.

Ian Oh, that's true. Yeah, we wrote movies for the Lifetime Network that are not great.

Sabrina That's so cool!

Ian They're not great, but we did them for hire.

Carrie Well.

Sabrina Which ones? Can you share?

Ian Oh, my God, I don't even know if I remember. One never got made.

Carrie Well, they don't have the same titles that we gave them. We titled one "Killing Your Daughter", but it is on IMDb as "Adopted in Danger". The story of a young woman who finds her parents using a 23andme style genetic test. And, then they try and kill her.

Ian And then, her parents try and kill her.

Carrie Ripped from the headlines.

Ian As what happens in Lifetime movies.

Carrie And, then one of them was called "Fatal Fitbit". And, that was an idea that they pitched to us. We just kind of had it done.

Ian We just wrote it.

Carrie And, then the other one, I don't think they could have used the working title, which was "A Deadly Bridenapping", but I don't know what they called it now.

Ian That one they gave us, too, I think.

Carrie Yeah, that was another...Yeah. After the success of "Killing Your Daughter", they came to us with some ideas. So, then we were just kind of like writing their...

Sabrina That's so cool.

Ian Weird Lifetime movies.

Carrie I mean, a girls gotta eat, ya know.

Sabrina I know some Lifetime movie writers. What, everybody.

Carrie Honestly, I will say you're poo pooing them right now, but I think they are actually...

Sabrina I'm not knocking them at all, for the record.

Carrie No, no, not you. Ian is.

Sabrina Oh, ok.

Carrie No, not you. I'm saying Ian. Ian is. Sorry.

Ian I was poo pooing them. I definitely was.

Carrie I think that they are, like, exactly what - there's such a formula to them. To me, they're like writing sketch. They are exactly what they promise every time. And, so I don't think it's bad to - as like, an exercise. It's not bad to just give someone exactly what they want on page 15. There needs to be a scare.

Ian They're very structured. They're very...

Carrie And, that is a good exercise.

Ian Yeah. I will say the first movie we read out loud with friends who are like actors and stuff, and I've never enjoyed a reading more. We were just, like, laughing throughout it. It's a weird thing where it's like - it is serious, but it also is a little arch, and obviously is ridiculous.

Carrie And, they had to keep pulling us back on it a little bit. I was like, this is very close to camp, right? I mean, we're so close to camp, right under the edge. I had a couple of lines that they made me cut because they were too, like, eyebrow raising, mustache twirly. But then there are other ones that they let us keep.

Ian Anyway, yeah.

Sabrina That's so fun. That's really cool.

Ian Is it? [Ian laughs.]

Sabrina Oh, this is a good one. Do y'all have any tips or advice for protecting your mental health while on submission, or receiving feedback? Yeah, we talked about that a little bit, too, and I feel like that's a good one, that sometimes we need to protect our mental health on, as well.

Ian Yeah.

Carrie It's so important.

Ian Yeah. I will say that having an acting background, and trying to do it professionally, was like the best training in terms of rejection.

Carrie No one's been rejected more than us...

Ian Because it's just constant, and it's like all the time...

Carrie And, it's sometimes for really silly reasons, too. You're half an inch too tall.

Ian Yeah, it can just be brutal, too. It's just like, 'Yeah, you are not as in shape as you should be,' or 'I don't like your voice,' or whatever.

Sabrina It's really personal. It's personal with the writing, but it's super personal when you're an actor.

Carrie It's just like your body. Yeah. Yeah.

Ian Yeah, I mean, writing is different because you just spend so much time, and it's like, it is heartbreaking when it's like years and then it all comes back finally. It's just delayed. It's a different kind of grief. One thing that I think helps is to have different projects going. So, it's not necessarily like you're just focusing on this one thing. You know, if you're writing this book that obviously takes up so much of your headspace. But, once you're submitting, if it's like, 'All right, I'm gonna write a short story' or something, or do something else just to like, so I have that. If nobody accepts.

Carrie I wish that I had a better answer that wasn't that. I wish that there was a better answer than to keep my brain steady. But that's really the only thing that I've ever found to give me some sort of peace is to have projects in different phases of creation at any given point. So, you're like if you have one thing that's getting all of its rejections, you have something else that's in its very new baby phase where it's still really exciting and nobody's taken a crap on it yet. Additionally, that helps you weather the rejections. But, it also helps me - it also helps me be productive, too. Like if there's something that's in a very tedious, like getting feedback and having to do very tedious rewrites. Or, you're really in the weeds with something, but there's something else that's very blue sky and you're still like, 'Any idea's a good idea. I'm just brainstorming', and something else that's like finished and you're just like looking at it coming back from the printer or something. It's good to have - to me, it keeps my brain productive because I can't just sit in blue sky, and brainstorm. I need to temper that with some of the nitty gritty or some of it like sitting down and writing, just actually writing. All of that. It's good to break all of that stuff up and rotate between those different projects, which it's easier said than done because it's hard to have time to focus on different things. But, to me that's the only thing that can keep me sane.

Ian Yeah. I would also say community is helpful.

Carrie Oh, yeah, yeah.

Ian I had a very small writers group and we're still friends.

Carrie They're still your writers' group. You still write with them.

Ian I do, but I moved. But for a while it was like, very intense and yeah, that was so helpful because they would help me keep on point about stuff like submitting to things, which I hated. Yeah. And, just like help you when it's nothing but rejections, because they're going through it too. And, to learn how to celebrate in other people's success. That's also really helpful to be like if they actually get something to be like, 'Great! I'm gonna be happy for you because we're all in this together. And, I'm not just gonna be sitting by myself.'

Carrie Yeah. You're just waiting for your own stuff, you're gonna be waiting a long time, for a lot longer than if you celebrate your friends. And, also celebrating tiny little milestones, too. Like, just finishing something, or sharing it with someone, or somebody asks to read it, or somebody... just like, celebrating those.... Because you might not go all the way. It might not sell, it might not get whatever. But if you can just be happy with some kind of, like any sort of - I will cling to any slight thing to celebrate.

Ian Yeah. And, those are also helpful because it's not like when the book is published, it's not like that ever ends. It's like when we got the deal finally, it was like we had a day where we like, we got ice cream, and then we're like, 'Oh, God, we have to finish it. Are people gonna hate it?' And, blah, blah, blah. And, then you do all the work and you're getting the feedback, and then the book is released. And, that's a fun day where it's like, 'Oh, the book's out.' But then it's like, 'Is it selling enough? Are we doing enough to promote it?' Blah, blah, blah. So, it's good to have that community and sort of habits. Yeah. The other thing I would say, if you get a really brutal rejection, I think it's also as much as we're saying it's good to have other projects and to keep busy, I think it's also good to just recognize, like, this hurts. I'm gonna take a couple. Like, when I was acting, at least I used to be like, I'm gonna take a day and be upset that I got - or a week or something, I don't know. And, just, like recognize that it sucks.

Carrie That it's down to me and one other girl for a Diet Coke commercial.

Ian Yeah. And, that I got really far and it almost happened.

Carrie And I didn't get it.

Ian Or, I spent all this time, and sit with it, and process it, and then keep going. And, hopefully you have this other project you can work on.

Sabrina That's really smart. Yeah. I love all that. I love the rewards. Like rewarding yourself even for the small things. Like celebrate all those yays, yes. Even if it's just like, 'I'm gonna have extra chocolate today.'

Ian Yeah, totally.

Carrie Chocolate is a great way. That's usually how I celebrate.

Sabrina Me too.

Carrie But, you have to!

Sabrina Or, like small rewards, too. You don't have to even spend money on your rewards. It can just be something - maybe you soak in a bath that night.

Ian Yeah, totally.

Carrie A little treat.

Ian Yeah. Do the hobby you've been putting off because you've been working all nighters to get there.

Sabrina Maybe there's a movie you've been saving and you can finally watch it tonight.

Ian Yeah, exactly.

Carrie Now we've got a cameo. Pearl cameo. [Pearl is Carrie and Ian's newborn baby]

Ian Pearl cameo.

Carrie I don't remember which side I was on. Do you?

Ian Hello.

Carrie Hi!

Sabrina (To Pearl) Hi! Hi! Oh, my gosh. Look at your little cheeks. Hi!

Ian (To Pearl) Any thoughts? Any advice?

Carrie (To Pearl) Want to have some milk?

Sabrina So, cute! Okay, so for anyone who hasn't read yet, which you need to get on it, you want to tell us about *Margo Mertz Takes It Down*?

Carrie Sure. Yeah. So, *Margo Mertz* is the story. Do you want me to go?

Ian Yeah, I think so. It seems like you're feeling it.

Carrie I haven't done this one in a while. I was, like, thinking about the sequel, but yeah. So, the original Margo Mertz, she is a high school fixer in that she can erase embarrassing things from the internet for people. So, she started her whole business to pay for college, where she will clean up your embarrassing tweet or screenshotted conversation or something that you didn't want out there on TikTok. Or something that you didn't want there on TikTok. She will take it down for you. And, that's how she starts. But, in the course of the book, she discovers a revenge porn site that is created featuring high school girls at her school. And, she spends the book trying to track down the people who made it, trying to bring them to justice. And, there's some twists and turns along the way, but that's the gist of the first book. It's got a little bit of mystery, a little bit of romance, but it's mostly a tale of online photo sharing, without consent.

Sabrina Are either of y'all tech geniuses over there? Like, are y'all gonna hack my computer when we get off of this?

Carrie And, your listeners will not have heard this part about how I just lost my phone by leaving it on the hood of a car... That is a really great encapsulation of my tech ability.

Ian Not at all. No. We did research, and then we had a friend.

Carrie We have a friend who is a tech genius.

Ian Yeah, like legitimate. Like.

Carrie Really smart.

Ian He owns his own company and just seems to know everything.

Carrie He seems to know everything.

Ian We didn't think he would know anything about hacking. And, we had like one meeting, he was like, 'Yeah, here's how hacking works.' And, we would give him all these scenarios. They were like, 'Is this a thing that you can do with a computer?' And, half the time he'd be like, 'Sort of, but you would call it this,' and then the other half he'd be like, 'No, that's nonsense. Like, nothing you said makes any sense, but you could do this.' So, he was our MVP. I would say...

Carrie Yes. He gave us so much. He gave us terms that we could incorporate or just would help us to phrase things the way...

Ian We would literally send him an email with sentences and be like, 'Is this how you would say it?' And, then he would literally rewrite it for us and be like, 'No, you do something like this,' and then we would rewrite it so it wasn't plagiarism.

Sabrina That makes sense, if you don't know it specifically. That's a really great way to do it, versus just doing the research and trying to figure it out on your own. So, some of that stuff is super tricky.

- Carrie Well, now we try to do the research, too. But for instance, with the second book, we tried to talk to as many people who have worked on political campaigns. Because of the second book, Margot's working on a state senator's campaign. So, we tried to talk to whoever we could who had a toe in that world. Because you get anecdotes from people that are real that you might be able to find a way to work in, or you just get a sense... it just becomes richer. And, that's stuff that you wouldn't - I don't know that we would find it by just googling and researching.
- Ian I will say do the research first. Like, by the time you send it to Jeff, as much as I was making fun of our lack of tech abilities, the main plot stuff basically worked. And, a lot of scenarios worked. It was a lot of like, I was relieved that the whole basic climax of the book. I was like, 'He's gonna say this is nonsense.' And, he was like, 'Yeah, that's pretty much sort of how it works.' And, then he helped us fine tune it. And, that was based on our research and doing stuff. So, it is important to do both.
- Carrie I mean, I would be mortified if somebody read these, and I'm sure there are like, errors in the books, but I want there to be enough plausibility that people would read them and accept them, especially if they were tech savvy. That's my goal.
- Sabrina I know nothing about tech, but it seemed all legit to me. I was like, I was nodding along and there with it. I felt it.
- [Ian laughs.]
- Ian Good. Yeah. We tried, and that was definitely like a challenge. We thought it was a cool idea. Like, this idea that someone could fix things and just get on a computer and erase stuff from other people's phones, or whatever.
- Carrie And, one of the things that Jeff kept stressing was that so much of hacking isn't what you think. Like, it isn't Sandra Bullock in "The Net." Like, you know, going into the computer and hacking into the mainframe, and whatever. He was like, 'How you steal identities, how you get people's stuff, is human error.' You are just looking for - you're emailing someone and asking them and getting their password that way. Or, they slip up and they leave their computer open at the cafe, and they're passcode is on it, or whatever.
- Ian He gave us a scenario where he was like - he's like technically he was like, if you want to get in someone's bank account, he was like, he gave us this really complicated scenario. It's like you could go outside and have a nest and try and get on their WiFi and hope that the iOS isn't updated. He's like, 'But what happens most of the time is someone just calls someone and pretends to work from the bank. And, that's how you get someone's password.'
- Carrie Which was great for us, because it meant that that stuff is so much more active and visual for Margot to do versus, like, you know...
- Sabrina In a novel. Yeah. In a movie, or whatever. The typing into the computer. Those work really well. But yeah, translating into book and words only, that makes a lot of sense. Okay. Are we getting a *Margot* movie? Do we know? Can you say?

Ian I don't think we are.

Carrie I think we know, and I think we're not.

Ian Unfortunately.

Carrie Sadly

Sabrina Okay, well, everybody listening who can make this happen, let's make this happen.

Ian Yes. Tweet @Temple Hill. Tell them that you want a movie.

Carrie Tell them you want a third book.

Ian Yeah. Tell Penguin you want a third book.

Sabrina Do you have an idea for a third?

Carrie Yeah. We do.

Ian We have vague ideas for a third and fourth book.

Carrie One of us wants there to be a third book and one of us wants there to be a fourth book.

[Ian laughs.]

Carrie We'll let you figure out who.

Ian Yeah. So that's still in negotiation.

Carrie But there may not be another book at all. It may end with *For the Win*. I'm not sure.

Sabrina Okay. So y'all are still negotiating if those are gonna come out, and we'll find out about those later. Okay. Well, I'm gonna keep my fingers crossed for a movie. And for more books.

Ian Thanks! Yeah, please!

Sabrina So, you mentioned this a minute ago that this one is about a senator election, and so this is *Margot Mertz For the Win* that we're talking about now. This is book two in the *Margot* series. So, would you like to tell us a little bit more about that, and then also what we can look forward to without getting too spoilery?

Carrie Yes. So, Margot was volunteering for two campaigns. One is a state senate candidate, as we mentioned, and just happens to be Avery Green's dad. He's running for state senate. And, then the other is the Roosevelt High election for student body president. And Margot only becomes involved when she discovers that one of the creators of RB from the last book, the revenge porn site, is actually running for school president, in an attempt to sort of rehabilitate his image. So, she throws herself into the race, helping - she's not helping. She's helping his opponent's campaign. She's gonna become, like, a campaign manager. And, so these two campaigns kind of feed off of each other, and have some interesting overlap. And, in general, the book deals with, again, issues of consent this time around, like power dynamics, age differentials and politics.

Sabrina Okay, cool.

Ian And, it's an interesting journey because it sort of starts, she's trying to really go away from cleanup work, and sort of her identity in the first book. And, I don't want to give anything away from the first book, but it's really sort of a deconstruction of her character, and she has to question herself a lot. So, she's trying to do this new thing. She's like, 'I'm gonna get into politics and be active...

Carrie And be more of a hobby that's not about cleaning.

Ian Yeah. And, be part of a community. And, then she eventually gets asked to use those skills to help in both campaigns, and it becomes murky.

Carrie She gets sucked back in.

Sabrina Okay, cool.

Ian They keep pulling her back.

Sabrina I can't wait to read. When this comes out, the book will be - is your publication date still on track? It didn't get pushed back?

Carrie November 15th.

Ian Yeah, as of now. Last time, it got pushed back, like, the week before. You never know. Supply chain issues. But yeah. November 15th.

Sabrina I don't know if y'all are in a spot where you can do this. Would you like to read an excerpt?

Pearl [Baby coughing.]

Ian Oh, yeah, totally. I'll take her. We don't need to both collaborate on this excerpt reading.

Carrie No, I can do it. I can read it. Sorry for the audience listening at home. I just had to hand off our baby. Okay, here we go.

Sabrina Yay! Oh, my gosh. I'm so excited.

Carrie This is a section from the first chapter, and it's kind of a random section, so we'll find out. This is the first time I've used it as an excerpt. We'll see if it works. Okay. "I'm Margot Mertz," I said. Pria squinted. "Follow me." She led me out of the room and down a long, narrow hallway. "What made you want to volunteer for the campaign? College credit, sense of duty, boredom. All three?" "Sort of, but mostly Shep has some policies that I really like." Pria raised her eyebrows. "Oh, yeah. Are you, like, a policy wonk?" "Not really," I told her, "but I'm interested in his proposed amendment to 245." Now Pria looked really surprised. "That's very specific." "Shep Green, whose ownership of several area car dealerships made him something of a minor celebrity in North Webster, was running to be State Senator for the 57th District of the State of New York. The district had been held by Republicans for years, but recent demographic shifts made it more of a tossup this year. Shep was running mostly on expanding healthcare coverage, bringing jobs to western New York, and pledging to finish construction on the North Webster Transit Center. North Webster's Transit Center is just an Amtrak station that has been half finished for nearly a decade. It's both an eye sore, and a local embarrassment. But, on the flip side, teens go there to drink. But, his platform also included a host of smaller agenda items, like the amendment to State Law, Section 245, which would make the dissemination of explicit images without consent a felony. That got my attention. A law that would essentially make all forms of revenge porn illegal? That was worth campaigning for. And, yes, Shep Green also happens to be the father of Avery Green, who I may still have feelings for. But, Avery is not the reason I'm working on the Green campaign. He is the reason I started applying lip gloss between periods three and four. Ugh, I know."

Scene.

Sabrina Oh, my gosh. Okay. That was such an extra awesome treat because you narrated the first book. Are you narrating an audiobook for the second?

Carrie I did, yeah. That will also be my voice.

Sabrina Yay! Okay. Yay! Oh, that's so cool.

Carrie Yeah. This is very silly, but I actually had them put that in our contract because I was like, 'I really want to do the book. You have to let me do it.' And, maybe they would have wanted it anyway. I have no idea. But, I've always wanted to do audiobooks.

Sabrina You were like, 'Uh-uh, I'm gonna lock this down.'

Carrie Yeah, it's fun. It's really fun.

[Ian returns.]

Carrie Hi. Welcome back.

Ian Hi, guys. How was the excerpt?

Carrie For future reference, does this excerpt work? Should we use it, do you think it was clear?

Sabrina Oh, I liked it. I thought it had a really great tie-in to the first book, especially. Because of the - I don't remember what the number is. I told you I'm bad at numbers. But yes. 251, 250... something.

Carrie 245. It doesn't matter. But that's great.

Sabrina And, it's funny. And, I love the tie-in to Avery and that we get to hear a little bit about.

Carrie Okay, great. Yeah, so, if you liked Avery, there's a lot more Avery in this book. I would say this is more of an Avery book. And, that's the thing that I'm most excited about is for people to get to see more of his character.

Ian Yeah, a lot more character development and understanding where he came from and his whole backstory.

Carrie That's kind of fun.

Ian And, also their relationship. Yeah, it's cool.

Sabrina Oh, I love that so much. I just love the way she really grew with him.

Carrie He's kind of the perfect foil for somebody who's cynical, and has a hard time being vulnerable, because he's such an open and earnest and lovely person. We were like, 'If we're gonna pair someone with Margot, it has to be somebody like... who would drive her the craziest?'

Sabrina But also really complement her character. Their little personalities can work together, and I think they work really well together.

Ian Yeah.

Carrie He definitely brings out growth in Margot.

Sabrina And, we're gonna get some more of his dad time in this one, clearly, as well. So, we're gonna get some more Avery family life in there, too. That's cool.

Carrie Yeah, yeah.

Ian Yeah, a lot more.

Carrie Yeah, but we can't say more. You'll have to read the book for more. No more spoilers.

Sabrina Yes, everybody read. And, are there any recently released or upcoming books either of you would like to recommend?

Carrie Oh, I haven't been reading as much because of having babies.

Sabrina I understand.

Ian How recent is recent? I think these are like mine are like, a one year old, but I'll recommend them anyway because I really like them.

Carrie I was just reading *Consent* by Vanessa Springora. I think that's how you say her last name. I'm not sure. It is not a novel. It's a memoir.

Ian Mine are both memoirs, too.

Carrie We're the worst! It's just been like, anyway.

Ian Yeah, okay. And, my two books were *The Third Person* by Emma Grove, which is a memoir graphic novel, which is amazing and really eye opening.

Sabrina Oh, that's interesting.

Ian Yeah, it's fascinating. It's about a woman who had dissociative disorder when she was transitioning from being a man to a woman. And, it's about her therapy sessions, and each chapter sort of - is her as a different person. And, it was like I could not put it down. It was one of those things. I think it was even like when Calvin was born, Pearl was just born, and that's what it's been in my ten minutes, just, like, reading through, and it's really fascinating. And, then *Leaving Isn't the Hardest Thing* by Lauren Hough, which is another memoir, but it's written in essays. Also, really eye opening and fascinating and powerful. Yeah.

Sabrina I'm gonna have to check those out. I don't read enough memoirs.

Ian Sorry.

Sabrina I don't.

Ian I know we're laughing at ourselves, and we are here on a book podcast and we didn't pick any narrative books. We really shot ourselves in the foot.

Carrie It's been... well, we have a newborn baby.

Sabrina Y'all just had a baby. Probably not super long ago. Finally finished up on *Margot* stuff.

Carrie Oh, yeah.

Sabrina Y'all have had a lot going on, and I mean, there's still pandemic happening.

Ian Yeah.

Carrie I recently did a - I think this is kind of recent. *Does My Body Offend You?* I was on a panel about it, with like Marie Marquardt and Mayra Cuevas, maybe? It's written from - there's two main characters, and they sort of swap chapters, and they write from different... Marie Marquardt and Mayra Cuevas. They are... I thought that was really smart and really cool. It's about a girl who - she's like, gets a dress code offense in a high school, basically for having large breasts, and maybe possibly for being a minority. And, it just kind of deals with, like, unpacking that and the two main characters sort of like awakening to activism. It's cool. I like that a lot. That's pretty recent, I think. Yeah.

Sabrina Nice. Okay, cool. Where can we find you both and your books?

Carrie I'm at, wait, I don't know, because I don't have my phone. I think I'm @CarrieMcCrosen on Twitter. I know I'm that.

Sabrina I think it's your name.

Carrie It's just my name and Instagram. I'm @misscarielynne, I think. Yeah.

Ian And, I'm @IanMcWethy on Twitter. And, you can also go to www.ianmcwethy.com

Carrie And carriemccrosen.com. I think Margomertz.com is also a website that we have, so we haven't updated in a while. Sorry about that.

Ian And, the books can be found wherever books are sold.

Carrie Wherever you buy your fun bookseller. Your fun bookseller places.

Ian Go to your independent bookseller if you can, and they should have it, or you can order through there.

Sabrina Okay, cool. Thank you, thank you, thank you so much for joining me! This was so fun.

Ian Thank you so much for reaching out. This was so much fun.

Carrie I know. We're so flattered!

Ian It really means so much.

Carrie We haven't done very many of these. We really appreciate you having us.

Ian Yeah.

Sabrina Ok everyone, that's a wrap on Episode 7! For a Content List and all the Carrie and Ian links, visit the Show Notes page on my website, linked below. Thanks so much for joining us!

Sabrina Okay Ginny, say goodbye!

Ginny [Barks.]