

# Episode 77

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

book, author, write, indie, people, tend, ads, urban fantasy, series, genre, easy, indie author, fantasy, learning, paranormal romance, happen, readers, bit, amazon, romance

## SPEAKERS

Kel Carpenter, Carissa Andrews



Carissa Andrews 00:00

Welcome back to the podcast. Have you ever researched your own genre and found an indie author who you can totally be besties with? If Of course they knew you existed and you were able to meet them in real life? Well, I can tell you I certainly have. And I am excited to say that this week, I had the privilege of interviewing one of them. Carpenter is a USA Today best selling author in the same genre I write in urban and paranormal fantasy, she often mixes mythology and religious undertones into her fantasy, and she's making a killer living doing so. Plus, I adore everything about her. Now, according to her bio, on her website, kale is a master of words, when she's not reading or writing. She's traveling the world loving me pestering her editor and spending time with her husband and for babies, some of whom will, by the way, make an appearance in the video version of this podcast episode, if you want to see an edited version. But I'm interviewing you today. And without further ado, we're gonna get this interview started. Let's hop to it. Thank you so much for joining us on the other revolution podcast. I'm super excited that you're here today. So for my audience who maybe doesn't don't know super ton about you other than what I've already introduced, do you want to tell them who you are and what it is that you write.



Kel Carpenter 01:22

So I am Kel, as you have said, and I like to write fantasy books. Some are high fantasy, some are more low fantasy, urban fantasy, paranormal romance. At the moment, I'm

sticking with fantasy, but I am hoping to one day kind of branch in the contemporary some. I tend to write very strong female friendships. That's a theme that occurs across pretty much all of my series. I love to have sidekicks that are animals. One of them has a raccoon one,



Carissa Andrews 01:52

I have read that one.



Kel Carpenter 01:54

Yeah, one has a crow. So there, there's definitely a range of things that I like to kind of be outside the box with. They're very steamy for urban fantasy. I tend to be honest, it's like I limit sex scenes, but they tend to be a lot less than what I typically find. So I guess the best way to describe it is definitely high fantasy, high action, lots of humor, but then also quite see me alongside of it. So absolutely, that I think that's a really good mix, though, especially in the urban fantasy and paranormal romance side of things, I think it's kind of the way the genres have really kind of veered off towards, at least in my experience. It's what I like to write. And so that's just kind of what I stick with. It's not clear cut as they want swear, you know, 10 years ago, urban fantasy was very low romance, very plot driven. You know, here's the book, and you can read them almost independently. And then paranormal romance was like, here's a romance with a little bit of magic. And it's usually one one couple per book. So I kind of veered into this other genre that is emerging, because I think that there's several other authors that definitely fit into this. And we also call it a paranormal romance urban fantasy, but really, we're somewhere in the middle.



Carissa Andrews 03:14

Do you have a name for this new sub genre yet?



Kel Carpenter 03:18

I still just call it urban fantasy that Stevie I know that some people call it urban fantasy romance. I won't lie. I struggle with this genre definition. Because already the only differentiator really between paranormal romance and urban fantasy is the romance. So if you're an urban fantasy romance, it's like well, that's basically paranormal romance.



Carissa Andrews 03:39

So right although you could have paranormal and like medieval fantasy times, who knows?



Kel Carpenter 03:44

And then it's not urban anymore. But then it's not urban anymore, then it would be fantasy romance. If it's like a different or historical fantasy romance, which very true love to Oh, man. Oh, yeah, there's so many different sub genres in it, all the different categories. Amazon doesn't make it easy with a when they keep opening up all these new categories and options. And then you're trying to figure out where in the world does your book fit under both most of the time and then the other ones that I also think typically fit like mythology is something that often pops up in my books, so I'll put it under mythology. Sometimes it can go into like the vampire thriller, you know, something thriller along those lines, if it's one that's a bit more action driven and less romance. Those don't happen very often anymore, though.



Carissa Andrews 04:38

Hmm. Now, why is that?



Kel Carpenter 04:42

Especially with the pandemic, I think that in general, I'm trending towards things that are less less angsty and less drawn out. I don't have the attention span to wait 10 books for a couple to get together and I don't share is due to any No,



Carissa Andrews 04:59

I hear Although in saying that I wouldn't go to insta-love either, because I'll tell you, I had a series that came out last year. And the romance part was not the biggest part for me. So it was it was all plot driven was this particular series. And so they kind of hooked up in like, well not hooked up, but not hooked up like that. But they got together, they got to know each other in the first chapter. And a lot of people thought it went really fast, because weeks passed by but it's, you know, not all described, you're not drawing out the whole, like the...



Kel Carpenter 05:31

Time jumping. Yeah, pacing of it can still be interesting there, my couples don't tend to get together until book two or three. And I always, almost always write enemies to lovers. How much of an enemy they are kind of defer series to series, but I think that's probably my tried and true trope.



Carissa Andrews 05:50

Gotcha. I love it. That's really cool. I have a character or a series that has that that type of trope in it, although they weren't really enemies, because they didn't know each other in the beginning. But now it's like, they've kind of done the flip flop over there. But when they first met each other, they hated each other. It was funny. Okay, so speaking of you writing about you obviously mentioned, you know, 10 years ago, how genres are different. How long have you been writing? How long have you been doing this whole indie author, game.



Kel Carpenter 06:14

I started writing when I was 16. So that's essentially a decade ago. The first book is actually the book I wrote when I was 16, actually was 15. But yeah, I then took a break from writing for a few years, and I didn't really come back to it until about five years ago. So you know, I've been in the indie world for four to five years at this point.



Carissa Andrews 06:42

But I've been writing a bit longer. So how are you liking the indie world? Are you still like thrilled with it? Or are you thinking, Oh, my gosh, this was way, way more than I was anticipating.



Kel Carpenter 06:49

No, it is more work than I anticipated. But at the same time, I really enjoy being able to be in charge of my own career and my publishing schedule, I love that I get to kind of work with my designers, I think covers my favorite part of my job. And that's something that I wouldn't get to enjoy and have the perks of if I had been traditional. You know, and there's a lot of things even within traditional that you still have to handle the, it's not really much different. Like you still have to handle your social media, and your presence and your newsletter and all of that. And so, while it is more work, I think that there's also a lot more reward, especially in the current age with how much ebooks and audio books are really dominating the market. And in the life, you know, that's especially true. No one's going to

bookstores right now to buy books everyone's purchasing on Amazon and other places, right?



Carissa Andrews 07:39

Absolutely. So now, you mentioned covers are your favorite product? Do you do your own covers? Or do you work...



Kel Carpenter 07:43

No.



Carissa Andrews 07:45

Okay, so you have a designer that you work with? No,



Kel Carpenter 07:47

no, I have. I have a couple designers that are like my my main designers. Now I'm closer at your club is one of my main she's done. Three of my series, when she finished is the current one she's working on. So she's done half my catalog. And I'm definitely planning to continue working with her more, she's totally lovely to work with. trif is another one that's come onto the scene recently. And I quite enjoyed working with them, she made the process very simple. And then j at cover designs by one, I believe it is just like the other one that's doing all of my magic Wars Universe books. So these are, these are my main ones that I really, really enjoy working with. I'm not very good at hand holding. I'm the type of author that says here's some elements about my book, I want it to fit this genre, and I want it to be gorgeous. And yeah, that's basically it. I'm not the person that can tell you where a hand needs to go or what colors necessarily to use.



Carissa Andrews 08:48

I think that's actually the better situation to be honest. Because as soon as an author has too many ideas, then it's like the whole thing gets muddled up and it Yeah, you



Kel Carpenter 08:56

can designer a lot. Yeah, one of my closest friends is an author and a designer. And

regularly her biggest problem that she's told me about is that authors tend to say, Well, I want them to be in this kind of pose. And I need to look this way. And I want this kind of typography and these colors. And at a certain point, it's like you're your designer, they're never going to meet your vision. It's not their vision, because they're not in your head Lee.



Carissa Andrews 09:19

Yeah, absolutely. Well, yeah. Yeah, right. And at a certain point, it's like, okay, you're paid to know what you're doing. So I want to trust you to do the thing that hopefully you know what to do. Okay, so you mentioned that mythology as one of the things that come into your thing, which you and I share a lot of because I love mythology actually went to school to be an archaeologist until I realized I hated anthropology. But where does your inspiration come from for your stories? Do you read in your own genre? Are you Is it because you loved mythology,



Kel Carpenter 09:55

it's kind of a mix of things. So I actually have a degree in religious studies. And I tend to pull a decent bit of mythology from different world religions and small little tidbits from here and there. One that I know I've used a lot, and many people do is Christian mythology with Lucifer and Eve. And you know that story, I like to turn things on their head and completely changed almost everything about it. But yeah, I find that really enjoyable after learning, you know, one way that it's basically always taught and then just changing it entirely. I really enjoy that. Yeah, so I really enjoyed learning about the Greek gods and Norse gods, all that kind of stuff growing up Egyptian gods. And so I really just love to pull from the world, whether it is religions or other cultures. Of course, there's a fine line to walk with that with appropriation, you know, I don't want to branch into that. But I read a lot. And I read a lot within my genre, and just about the world in general. I mean, I used to love to watch things like the Discovery Channel and stuff like that. And so I think that it sort of works its own way into my work without me really having to try.



Carissa Andrews 11:08

Gotcha, that makes a lot of sense. So with that being said, Then are you a pantsner? Or are you a plotter?



Kel Carpenter 11:13

Oh, I'm so much a pantsner. Unbelievable. Are you really? Yeah, yeah, I start, I started poke

with the concepts. My most recent one was I wanted to write a book about a demon summoning a girl who hated magic and demons. And yet somehow, she ended up tied to this demon. And that was literally the entire of what I knew when I went into my most recent series. You know, actually, that was my second most recent, my other one, I was like, I love the idea of a demon that comes back to punish for three dudes. And there happened to be like her mate like that. And it's literally it's like, such a short concept that I just liked the idea of, and then I sit down, and I just go. And I really enjoy pantsing. Because I tend to learn about things kind of organically in the way a reader does. I know that many people if you're not a pantser, you don't understand this concept. You know, but I truly don't always know what I'm going to write. When I sit down at the keyboard, I usually have an idea of like, Oh, I'd like you know, I need more action. This seems to something dramatic. A



Carissa Andrews 12:18

Yeah. Or,



Kel Carpenter 12:20

you know, I need I need more depth or this or that, you know, but I don't I don't really know until I get there. And then I know. So that's exciting. Sure.



Carissa Andrews 12:30

Well, I used to be a pantser like way back in the very beginning. And then I realized that my Virgo tenacity and tendencies, like, maybe a little too anxious when I didn't know what the heck I was doing. Like, I am now more of a hybrid, I have a tendency to a skeletal outline. And then I go in, and I just kind of rock and roll and let it kind of pants itself out the rest of the way. But it makes me it appeases my inner Virgo.



Kel Carpenter 12:55

To know the overall plot points before I go into something after the first book. Yeah, I tend to know the general character arcs that I would like to see in that book. I almost always know my ending. Even if I don't know my beginning, I almost always know where I like to end. Because I have a scene or something in mind, that's usually very traumatic and almost a cliffhanger that I like to end on. And so I kind of I tend to see these things before going into a book. And so it's, I'm not gonna say it's easy. But it's not as difficult to work your way towards that when you know what your end goal is, for sure. No, you know, this is

something you want to see happen. So what are the things you need to layer throughout? And I know that that definitely helps my editing process as well, that I don't have to go back and often layer in a bunch, because I already knew sort of, even if I didn't realize I knew. Yeah,



Carissa Andrews 13:44

I think knowing that ending is super critical. I mean, as long as you have that in place, and you understand the overall story arc and how that process works, I can see why that would make it very easy to be able to go ahead



Kel Carpenter 13:55

Yeah so it's like I don't have an outline. But I'm a pantsner with a tiny bit of the plotter instinct of you know, just to look ahead and think about that.



Carissa Andrews 14:03

Sure. So you've got that forethought and vision. Yeah, that makes sense. Okay, so walk us through a typical process when you are getting through starting a new concept. So from conception to creation, like what does your day look like when you're sitting down going, Okay, I'm starting something new. This is how I'm going to make it happen.



Kel Carpenter 14:24

Um, I would say again, it's, it's the the lightning strike of there's an idea and I decided that I'm going to write it and I sit down and I tend to mull over first chapters a decent bit, even while sitting in front of them until I find my starting wine. And that's something that's really important for me, I know some people can change things like that later on. But for me, it needs to stick and it needs to feel true to their voice because their voice is decided by that starting chapter. I often don't know that at all before I start. I've had many stories that I thought it would be one way and it was a completely different way as soon as I sat down to write them and the character was just like, No, I'm this Way, and that is how it is. And it's like, okay, that's how you are. Yeah, you know, so I sit down and I mole. And that first chapter is usually a little bit painful in the sense of, I still don't know them. But once I find my groove I can I just I know, I know how it is, you know, um, and from there, it's just continuing every little bit all the way through to the to whatever. And that is the hard thing about the first one is I don't always know my ending beforehand. I've had several of them that I didn't know until over halfway through. But that's usually the only book in a



series that I'm very kind of shaky on the ending for



Carissa Andrews 15:36

that makes sense, because it's a new concept. And you're still trying to like, figure out, like you said, the characters and who they really are, and who they're trying to become. And everything along those lines.



Kel Carpenter 15:44

I'm still learning the concept. Yeah, that's a lot of what it has to do with is I'm still figuring out the world. I'm learning my players and all of these things along with my readers. And so that first book, I don't tend to always know it until we're coming up on it. But usually, for the follow up ones, I have a pretty good idea because I don't tend to dive right into the following book. Okay. And I like to alternate too. So if I shouldn't, I can't alternate well, writing, but I can alternate in the sense of I write book one of a series and book two of a different series. And then I go back to my other series. And I think that that helps me kind of stay fresh with my ideas a bit,



Carissa Andrews 16:20

probably lets your subconscious kind of sit and stew a little bit on that first book, too.



Kel Carpenter 16:24

And how to work some of the things out sometimes I'm like, I want this to happen, but I don't know how to make it happen within my own world building. So how do I mess up? And that doesn't break my rules?



Carissa Andrews 16:33

Gotcha. So what does a typical writing day look like for you? Do you write in the morning? Or are you more of an evening?



Kel Carpenter 16:38

No. I have to get up and I get my coffee. Sometimes I'll go check my emails. I usually check in with a couple of my author friends in the morning. check and see if my designers

sent me anything many? I want to say all of them are oversea. No, no one of them is not. With our so I check to see if they sent me anything, since that is my exciting part of my job. Right. And then I go sit down. And in the morning, usually by 10 o'clock, I get up at like nine. So Mind you, that's not as late as it is for some people that have regular nine to five jobs. But I go and sit down and I work and I probably write for three to four hours, only breaking periodically for lunch. And then the afternoon is usually a bit more leisure. Well, I'll do my like cleaning and things and admin interspersed in between.



Carissa Andrews 17:30

Gotcha, that's really cool. So I am assuming then that means you write full time.



Kel Carpenter 17:35

And yes, I do write full time. I used to work a lot more hours, more than 40 hours. But it's honestly kind of the opposite. Now I probably work 40 or less at this point. Just because I can't write eight hours a day. Yeah, so I write three to four a day. And I write at least five days a week. Sometimes I will write a little bit on the weekends, especially if a book is really talking. I try not to do too much though, since it can be hard to keep those boundaries with work, and home life and work from home. As many people in the pandemic have learned,



Carissa Andrews 18:06

absolutely. I've even talked about on the podcast where it's like you have to learn to set those boundaries. And know when you're kind of approaching that burnout, it's super easy for us as authors especially, especially when the books are talking. So



Kel Carpenter 18:20

for me, a big thing is definitely spacing myself out. Even if I could write 5000 words a day, I tend to do about two to three, and I let it stop there so that I'm not burned out for the next day. And I tend to be able to hold on for a lot longer and go months and months you know before needing like a serious break because of that. And that's really helped me. So how many books do you usually write each year? I think the last few years, it's been five to six every year pretty consistently after my first year. So that's a mix between co authored and solos I tend to burn out much faster writing solos back to back. I could see why especially if it's in the same series. That's something I learned after my second or third year that I just can't do it's too exhausting to be in one character's head for so long. So



Carissa Andrews 19:07

so what what program do you use to write? Is it Scrivener? Is it word?



Kel Carpenter 19:12

Google Docs, Google Docs? Alright. And



Carissa Andrews 19:14

then because it makes it easy when you're co authoring?



Kel Carpenter 19:17

Yeah, it's actually how I got into it. So I used to use Word, but I actually lost my Word document several times and it didn't answer properly, which promptly stopped me using Word for anything except at its rate. I tried Scrivener I like Scrivener, but I am very messy with a keyboard and it doesn't know how to correct or at least I can't figure out how to get the program. And when it like and when I did get things transferred and then it would change all my fantasy words to Scrivener. It just it didn't work as great for me as it seemed like it did for a lot of people. But Google Docs I had really good luck with because it does have the the standard autocorrect it was very easy to break things up and still flip between chapters. I can Send in work between with a co author very easily. And you can leave comments in Google Docs that transfer over into a Word doc, as soon as you download it, which is really helpful with my editor, because I'll have things where I'm like, I don't remember which way I had this in the last book, please double check for clarification or whatever. Right? So that she knows to go look for that. And obviously she I mean, she probably would anyways, but you know, if something I know that I'm like, I think this is shaking.



Carissa Andrews 20:24

Right? Like, I can't even remember, you know, I've been asleep since then.



Kel Carpenter 20:30

I don't know. I can't expect her to always know off the top. Right.



Carissa Andrews 20:33

I'm right there with you. It's amazing to me, the people who I suppose super weird, like as authors, you think we would be the first ones to remember, but it's usually like the fans who read it. And they're like, this is so not how she described that thing in that book. And



Kel Carpenter 20:46

it's like, how do you remember that? Yeah, I have some mega readers that sometimes I'll have to ask a question of or listen that where I'm like, I can't remember, I don't even know what book this was, then.



Carissa Andrews 20:59

You write so many different series? It does, it gets a little bit. Crazy. Okay, so one of the questions I have for you is do you Did you always know you're going to indie publish? Or did you want to go traditionally, at first, when you're starting,



Kel Carpenter 21:12


I very much wanted to be traditional when I was 1516. And I wrote my first book back then, and he was still so so so new. You know, even even the people he talked about in India now the vast majority of them were not around, they're the ones that, you know, we're probably started up about then. I didn't know much about it. But it was kind of it wasn't looked as favorably upon. And those biases that a lot of readers and even authors have, were very much on my mind at 16. It was only later when I was actually studying chemistry in school, and kind of figuring out what I wanted to do. And I was like, you know, I really want to publish, but I don't really feel like going through all of that. Why don't I just throw it out there and see how it does, you know, see if people are like really into it. And then it took off. Like, within months I was making what many would consider full time on one book. And then it just kind of continued from their book to book three, you know, on an upward So yeah, I it wasn't my original plan. But then I found that I really loved the journey kind of on the way after that first book. And I learned to really love things in indie life, you know, the cover artist side or like being in charge of my marketing and my book prices and my events and all of those kinds of things. That's really nice.





Carissa Andrews 22:30

For sure. Okay, so you mentioned that you like strong female protagonists, obviously with


the propensity to kick some butt. I love that as well. So are you like that in real life? Or do you just kind of like to channel that through your characters? Because you feel like you can't really do it so much in real life?


 Kel Carpenter 22:46  
I would say that I am but I'm a lesser version.

 Carissa Andrews 22:49  
Okay?

 Kel Carpenter 22:49  
Um, you know, my, my first heroine, Selena is a boxer and I actually did box for a bit in college. She was a boxer before I was but I got into it because I was really fascinated by the idea from writing it. I was a rock climber, you know, and a marathon runner and all of these things. I've always been a very strong personality when friends are kind of asked you know, if you get that question of like, what kind of drink would you be? My husband has called me tequila on the way down

 Carissa Andrews 23:26  
Got it. Got it. You're a bit intense on the on the get go. I love it.

 Kel Carpenter 23:33  
Um, you know, I I I'm not a super out there person in the sense of I'm definitely not an extrovert but I also don't think my her wins are and I don't think that that defines kick button is necessarily No. So I would say I'm a more moderate real life version of what that might look like. Hopefully a bit less emotionally damaged, then you're about right to braid.

 Carissa Andrews 24:00  
That's all good though. It's all good. Okay, so you mentioned that your first book was really kind of sparked things off very quickly. So was there a magical moment in your author career that did click everything into place for you? Were you thought this is the

thing? Or was it just because the first book did so well that you knew right away? Was there?



Kel Carpenter 24:20

Was there anything like just that? You know, when I first published I'd always known I wanted to be a writer like ever since middle school. You know, before that I didn't even have an idea of what I wanted to be as long as this thing's like always singer a dancer, like totally unrealistic given them.



Carissa Andrews 24:37

Yeah.



Kel Carpenter 24:39

You know, so I've always really known I wanted to be a writer, but it was more of a question of what am I going to do until I get there. So when I put my first book out, it was really is this one going to make it not is my career going to but is this one going to be where it starts? Because I've never been one to give up really, with things. I've very much get tunnel vision and that's kind of how it always has been with Writing for me. So when I put it out, and then it did it was like, Okay, now how do I rearrange those other things to make this happen? So that was when I switched what I was studying to religious studies, being a full time chemistry student and writing and working a full time job. Right, recommended.



Carissa Andrews 25:20

I can completely understand that one.



Kel Carpenter 25:22

No, but as the income increased, it definitely made it easier to put all of those plans in place. You know, being able to let go my waitressing job, that was a great moment and long overdue by the time I did it. You know, different things like that along the way. So I don't think I had a true moment of it. Which is strange. Now that I think back on it. I just always knew that eventually would get there was just a question of when. Gotcha.



Carissa Andrews 25:49

So did the marketing side of things come easy to you was that something that you just always knew I was,



Kel Carpenter 25:54

I didn't think it did until I've looked around. And my friends have always told me since the beginning, my author friends have said, you just you have an eye for it. And I've come to see that I can't design in Photoshop, I cannot edit. I am the last person anyone would ever want to proofread it. But I do tend to understand marketing on a gut reaction level, I would say is the best way to put it. ads have come fairly easy to me tropes and books. And I tend to like what the general market likes, which I think has voted well for my writing. Absolutely, you know, with a few twists in it to my own specifics, but I definitely think that marketing was something that came easy to me. And that has made it much easier to be an indie author.



Carissa Andrews 26:39

That's awesome. So do you do lean more on ads? Or do you lean more on promos? Or do you lean more on your newsletter? What is your, like, if you were talking to a newbie author? What would you recommend that they



Kel Carpenter 26:50

do? Um, I would say nowadays definitely adds, I think adds over the market is that I think ads are the only thing that's truly reliable at this point, you know, with the exception of maybe someone that found massive success on tik tok early on or something. Right, you know, but apart from those one in a million that happened, because you did the right thing at the right time, I definitely think that these days ads are words that I used to do promos a lot more, but I kind of have seen a lot of a decline in them over the years. My newsletter, well, I have one and I've kind of always had one, it's never been my main focus. I have social media platforms. And I'm pretty good with my facebook group and my Instagram, but my ads are really my bread and butter that keep my career and my income very stable and consistent. So that you know, it's not one month you're making, you know, a lot of money. A lot of money on in the next month, you're making like a 10th of that quite literally, I've had that happen. And that it's it's staggering. Because you look at it, you're like how can you possibly go from so high to so low. But the same is true in reverse, you can have a really horrible string of months, and then all of a sudden make more than you did the previous year. Right. staggering. And that is the glory, I think of ads

is that they keep it consistent so that you're not dropping solo ever, especially if you do them, right.



Carissa Andrews 28:09

And you have ones that are effective. Do you rely mostly on Facebook ads bookbub ads



Kel Carpenter 28:14

Facebook at the moment, but I'm experimenting more with bookbub and Amazon. In general, I have not liked Amazon the past year or two, because I found that they are exceptionally expensive for what they are. Prices are increasingly inflated. And because they're so simple, they're the one that most authors turn to. They're very straightforward, they're easy to understand, there's not a lot of room to screw up. Facebook is much less straightforward. But that's actually where I found the most success because I put a lot of time into learning it.



Carissa Andrews 28:43

Right?



Kel Carpenter 28:44

If you know the different parts of the platform, it's much easier to make it dance.



Carissa Andrews 28:48

Yep.



Kel Carpenter 28:49

If you don't know, you look at it. You're just like, oh my god, what does this mean? What does that mean? Which kind of ad should I run? should I have? You know, should the spend the cap? Should it be this? Should it be that and that is where I think a lot of authors flail they look at and it's just like, it looks like it's so much but really the tried and true thing is just keep trying keep messing with it. Keep learning and take it slow. Don't be someone that dumps hundreds of dollars into your first ad to do great your first time unless you know you stumbled on something quite honestly. And so I think that ads are



definitely where it's at right now and probably the way of the future for quite a while. I don't foresee that changing in the media.



Carissa Andrews 29:31

For sure. So were you self taught? Or did you take a course to be able to learn it all or did you do like the YouTube method like my son's always do for the game?



Kel Carpenter 29:41

wasn't gonna sound very good. I am. I have taken courses but I haven't found them helpful at all. Okay, most of the big ones that people recommend I found are either very basic information that you can learn if you just futz around with it, or are overly complex and go into stuff. That's truly Not needed and that frankly, many authors don't understand inherently because things like math. Well, I'm good with math, I do curse I look at it. I'm like, there's much simpler ways to do this, then what I'm seeing with a lot of the courses, and I can see why that would also be a deterrent for some people that look at my like, Hell, I suck at math like, okay, you know, I've had people tell me that it's like, but there are other ways, it's just a matter of finding them.



Carissa Andrews 30:28

Yep. And finding what works for you and the way your brain and that is



Kel Carpenter 30:31

very much true. I've, I've started and run ads for friends, and they have still struggled so much. And for something that works amazing for me, it just doesn't work for their book, or, you know, because I mean, that's the thing with different genres, you really have to narrow in on what your readers like, and you need to promote it in the best possible way to that group of people. So what mine like is going to be very different from what someone else's might like, even if it looks like oh, we're both urban fantasy. Well, does one of you have a really strong romance and the other not, is one reverse harem. And the other not, is one funnier is one darker, like, there's a lot of different factors in there, in the tone of a story that I think actually is what influences and add more than anything, influences whether or not it's going to sell to it imagine. Yes. So when you're when you're picking an audience, a lot of it has to do with tone, in my experience more than anything else? Does your tone match the tone of what you're trying to sell to? If it doesn't, I don't think that they sell very well.



Carissa Andrews 31:31

Do you think you before you start writing your books do you do kind of that concept in your head first, so you know exactly what your readers are going to be expecting from this series so that it's almost more of a right to market situation.



Kel Carpenter 31:43

I've only done that once. And I don't think I ever will again, because I found it. I won't lie though I have gotten a bit in this. I do think it's luck that I have gotten on to certain tropes before they became huge. So I wrote an academy series before Academy was big years before. Sure. And I was just putting out the last book when the academy trend happened to hit. And that was great for me.



Carissa Andrews 32:08

Yeah,



Kel Carpenter 32:09

I just wanted to write it something like that, because I love things like x men and Harry Potter growing up. So that was my first series. But it wasn't to market because Academy wasn't a trope for years before it happens. Right. And so there's different things like that, that I think that I've gotten a bit lucky with. That truly wasn't me trying for anything. It's just what I wanted to write and it happened to them become a thing. That's awesome. Well, now



Carissa Andrews 32:36

you're USA Today, bestselling author. And obviously that's a dream for a lot of Indies. So can you tell us what that process was like for you? Like, was it an easy process? Or was it one where you're like, Oh, my gosh, I'm pulling my hair out? How did that go?



Kel Carpenter 32:49

So I am one of the Indies that early on. You know, I did think that USA Today was a very big thing. And I ended up getting it through a box set. I can say honestly that I would not recommend that at this point. I know that that is very controversial. And so I don't want to step on toes. This is this is probably the one question that had me a little bit nervous.

You're like, Oh, God, things. I love that topic. And I think that most authors that might be watching this, at some point will probably already know that unless they're fairly new. I don't like getting it through block sets, I would love to go for it with a solo or co authors book. Actually, at some point, I think it would mean a lot more to me. I think my biggest issue with box sets is that a lot of times it really is just I don't think it's a cheat. So I have to say that. But I do think that it is taking advantage of a flaw in the system. A lot of boxes I know gave away hundreds and hundreds of copies of a book that was 99 cents that had 20 books in it. Gosh, I don't really like that, where that process. And I can't support that. I will say with so many people hoping to get it that. Honestly outside of tried it doesn't matter. readers, I have never had a reader tell me that they've looked at that I've had them tell me about my blurbs I have had one tell me that they a one star review, convince them to buy my book.



Carissa Andrews 34:11

I just saw that that was amazing.



Kel Carpenter 34:15

I've had literally everything else that readers have told me that have convinced them of mother, a brother of whatever has convinced them I've never had someone telling me that my USA Today mattered. And I really honestly can see it because the only times I think it matters are when you want to go for bookbub they tend to look more favorably on it. And this assumption talks about a lot. I can say that I've gotten three to four book bugs and they have all been after that so there is likely a correlation there. I can also say that they usually tend to matter when you're wanting to get published traditionally, I have not gone that avenue since I went indie. I haven't looked back because I like making money. Right? Like this. I feel like this. I don't want to be offensive to anyone that's traditional. I think it has become very common knowledge that it is easier to be midlist or an indie and make a very nice income compared to traditional, you don't have a publisher taking the your piece of the pie to keep the whole pie, or at least the portion of the agent or anything else. Yeah, exactly. Whereas the pie gets split among Amazon and your publisher and your agents and whoever else is in there. When you're traditionally published, I like to keep most of my pie. So,



Carissa Andrews 35:24

absolutely, I think most authors would. We've even seen many traditionally published authors, like coming into the indie space. Yeah. So that's been that's been pretty cool to

see even just in the past couple of years.

K

Kel Carpenter 35:38

Yes, I have noticed that. And I think that's really awesome. I also think it's really helped and making indie looks upon more favorably for readers that can tell the difference. I think that that's helped them see that this you know, that something is indie doesn't mean that it's poor quality, necessarily, and that you really need to judge each author and book on its own merit versus saying where it came from?



Carissa Andrews 35:59

Absolutely. I think it's nice to that Amazon has really well, I think all of the sites have really done a great job of not trying to separate indies versus traditional. So unless you really went digging to see whether or not this person or book or whatever is indie published, you probably would never know,

K

Kel Carpenter 36:17

I can have books right alongside Sarah J. Moss, or JK Rowling or anyone else. And it's entirely based on how it sells. And I do really like that. And I do think all of the platforms have done a pretty good job with that. I do wish that some platforms would be more available to their indie authors in terms of promotions and things because not all of them are made equal in that. But I do overall think that they have done a much better job to make it but unless a reader is truly looking for it, you can't tell the difference.



Carissa Andrews 36:48

So are you wide? Or are you are you are you hybrid,

K

Kel Carpenter 36:52

I'm hybrid currently, so most of my series, okay, you, I find that urban fantasy and paranormal romance tend to be better off there. But I do have a dark fantasy series that I just took wide. So I'm still kind of building up a presence there and working on the changes in my marketing for clients. Because it is a bit different, you have a lot more platforms to manage. It's even more heavily ad dependent than Amazon is. Fortunately, I feel pretty confident my ad game, but it is a matter of the time investment, especially the initial time investment of getting a reserve set up. So that is one thing that I'm kind of still sort of

navigating the waters with.



Carissa Andrews 37:32

That makes a lot of sense. And that would explain why you're kind of testing the bookbub ads situation as well. And all that. Yeah, I can totally understand that one. Okay, so for the new indie authors who are listening to you and wanting to kind of follow in your lead, what kind of advice would you give to them? If they're completely brand new, just starting out? Maybe they don't even have a book out yet. But they're really wanting to do this thing? What What advice do you have for them?



Kel Carpenter 37:58

Oh, it's hard. It's hard.



Carissa Andrews 38:01

That's not good advice, kill.



Kel Carpenter 38:05

Picking the advices. So many things I would love to say, I knew but at the end of the day, it is hard. There is gonna be so many people on the journey from friends to family, you know, to colleagues that tell you that it's not possible that are going to assume even when you quote unquote, make it that you're you know, your spouse is the one and that you're just doing this as a hobby. Yeah, and the invalidation is regular as an author, indie or traditional, honestly, unless you're like, you know, George RR became late. Yeah. Neil, like, unless you're one of those people, it is a very, it can be hard, and having a support system, I think is a really big thing. But it's also possible without one I was fortunate and that my husband is very supportive. My best friend was always supportive, even before my book took off. She was like, do it do the thing. I love that my



Carissa Andrews 38:58

best friend was like that, too.



Kel Carpenter 39:01

She was always incredibly supportive. You know, my parents growing up it said it was a question of when not if it was when it took off. And I think that that really helped my self esteem going into it, but I never questioned if it would it was just when it would and so if you're gonna do it, then do do it. Like Don't say like, oh, when I find time to write or when it takes off, you know, with, like, with that if that silent if they're kind of or oh it in, you know, you've got to do it and you got to do it. 110% I know that can be hard because you look at it. You're like man, am I gonna make money in this? Like, I don't know, you know, kind of wishy washiness. But there's people that have started this year that popped up out of nowhere and are selling in the top 100 on Amazon, you know, that happens. It's I mean, I'm not gonna lie and say that it's easy. It was much easier when I started and it was even easier five years before. Right. Any author that's been around that long, let's tell you that but at the same time, it's doable. It's completely doable. You just have to put in the work and make sure you're delivering a great product. I will say one thing that I see a lot is that authors enter the indie sphere, and they choose to prioritize cover over editing. And so this is kind of like a secondary piece of advice beyond like, you know, yes, hard. But if you really want to go for it, make sure you get a good editor. Don't just pick a glorious, beautiful cover, and not get your book properly edited. And also don't don't make your own cover. I do believe that putting out a professional product matters. Even when I was brand new to the game, I got an editor to edit my book and edited it thoroughly. And it you know, it takes time, you can't expect it to be done instantly. Make sure that you're putting out the best product, make sure that your editor knows the genre that you want to go into so that they can help you because if you're new, you don't always know these things aren't really intuitive to a lot of people. And so you need someone there in your corner that says you know, your genre does this and you did this, you know to consider it. And you need that cover that says the right genres. Don't make your own cover and don't skimp on your editor will prioritize a beautiful cover over and over because that's something that I see even authors that have done this for a while still do. And I truly think that it hurts their work and it hurts India as a whole. Because that is where those comments about believing that India's lesser come from is when people do not do the full mile of putting out products. If you're going to pay for it. Like if you go to Starbucks, would you accept some Joe Schmoe is drink that says it tells you at Starbucks but I don't taste like Starbucks. go to Starbucks because you expect a certain thing. Someone purchases a book they're expecting a certain level of, you know, editing and probably cover.



Carissa Andrews 41:57

Yeah, definitely make sure you have that whole package.



Kel Carpenter 42:00

Yeah, and it makes your ads a lot easier to you spend a lot less if you have a good product to start with than trying to sell something that is not really ready for publishing.



Carissa Andrews 42:10

It's all about relevancy to like, for example with Amazon, if you want that thing to actually sell using Amazon ads. relevancy is such a huge thing and it that's part of the reason why the spend goes up and it's flooded with a bunch of books great because it's an easy platform. It's obviously the one where your books are being sold. But if your books aren't relevant, it's going to be a much harder sell and then all the other crazy things happen. Yes. Okay, so Cal where can people who are listening to this podcast or watching it find you if they want to come check out your books or come check out your stuff get on your newsletter, where do they go in order to be able to locate you?



Kel Carpenter 42:46

So my website kelcarpenter.com is fairly up to date. I usually updated it twice a year. Okay. So it's close. It's not always exact. But you know, that lays out my series and things like that. My group Kells crew crew spelled with a K.



Carissa Andrews 43:06

Love it is where



Kel Carpenter 43:07

I'm probably most active if people actually want to engage and interact and things like that. Facebook is my tried and true platform. I enjoy Facebook.



Carissa Andrews 43:17

Nice.



Kel Carpenter 43:17

And then beyond that, I mean, just looking on Amazon, I mean obviously people can join my newsletter and this and that but I'm all about you know, pick the thing that works for

you. If getting an email works for you, then the newsletter is the way to go. If you'd rather have someone to interact with Facebook groups, the way to go it just I'm on LinkedIn. I am not on Twitter or tik tok though. I won't lie, it looks amazing. But I know that I would waste way too much time on there that I need this.



Carissa Andrews 43:49

I hear you I completely 100% agree with you on that video.



Kel Carpenter 43:53

It's so it's just like I just tick tock came out and she's like, I'm not gonna do it. I'm not gonna do it. Because I already waste way too much time on Facebook and Instagram.



Carissa Andrews 44:00

Right? Oh, my gosh, I'm out there. But I'll tell you what, I spend more time watching the videos. Because if I tried it, it would be insane.



Kel Carpenter 44:09

Everyone tells me is even if they make videos, they spent way more time watching them. And I'm like, I don't need to be doing that with my life.



Carissa Andrews 44:16

Yeah, yeah. Too funny. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for joining us today. I'm super thrilled. Like I said that you were here and being able to have this conversation. I think you're going to inspire a lot of other Indians who are in the beginning stages, and maybe even those who are in the middle. I know you've definitely inspired me. So I'm very appreciative of that. So thank you. Thank you so much for joining us.



Kel Carpenter 44:38

No, I'm happy to be here. Thank you for having me. This has been really nice.



Carissa Andrews 44:43



I don't know if you could tell but I absolutely adore Kel Her story is amazingly inspiring. I mean, we all wish we were wildly successful with our first book right? And she is such an incredibly sweet person. I hope that you will take the time to check her out on her website. And of course definitely read some of her books. If you love urban fantasy with strong female characters and steamy scenes, I will make sure you have links to all the goods in today's show notes. So head over to [author revolution.org](http://authorrevolution.org) forward slash 77 to check them out, or download today's transcript. Now, if you enjoyed today's episode, I would really appreciate it if you drop a five star rating or leave a review on your favorite podcast platform. Your vote of confidence helps other listeners find the show and helps encourage them to listen. Well, my friend I am off to get some more writing done.



Kel Carpenter 45:36

What about you?



Carissa Andrews 45:37

Well go on. Get out of here. Go forth and start your author revolution.