

The Morgen Bailey Interview by Carrie King



Morgen Bailey

We all know how hard Ms Bailey works for writers, authors and poets, so I am thrilled that this hard-working lass has agreed to be grilled by another author, who doesn't work nearly as hard.

Hi Morgen, the tables are turned and now it is your turn to answer some seriously unasked questions and some often asked ones for your fans and followers to enjoy:

Hi Carrie. Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to it (gulp!).

What is the most blatant lie you've ever told (be honest)?

Wow. What a first question. Erm... Of course we all tell white lies ("yes, that looks great!") but blatant. Nothing specific springs to mind (I must be a goodie two-shoes) but I'm sure I've said I've enjoyed something when I really haven't.

O.K., Ms Bailey, if you say so.

What is the most important lack in your life?

At the moment, money; I can't complain because I have two lodgers (housemates), which means I don't have to have a day job (which is oh, so worth it) but their rent (and some work I do for another writer), only covers the bills so everything else has to come out of my savings, which looked a lot healthier this time last year (I left my job a year ago today!). There are things I want to do (lodger no.1 could do with a new bed, lodger no.2 extra sockets in his room) but will just have to wait. I did win £45.10 on the Euro Millions on Friday so that was a "woo hoo" moment. I'm a guest on a writing course at Wimbledon, London next week so that will go towards the petrol. :)

What is the most demeaning thing that has ever been said about you as a writer?

I've been very fortunate that almost everyone has reacted positively to my writing (unless they're just being nice). A poem (which I'm still fond of) I took to my first ever writing workshop meeting back in January 2005 was pulled to shreds and nearly put me off but by the time the next Monday came around, I'd said, "I'll show you!" and I did (with a short story, which is probably why I write very little poetry).

And here we are eight years later.

Can you look back and pinpoint the best moment in your life?

Probably the second writing workshop meeting, or somewhere in between, because I realised how magical creating fiction was. It took me a few years to realise I could do it for a living (although I'm still

Morgen Bailey Biography

Based in Northamptonshire, England, Morgen Bailey ("Morgen with an E") is a prolific blogger, podcaster, editor / critic, Chair of NWG (which runs the annual H.E. Bates Short Story Competition), Head Judge for the NLG Flash Fiction Competition. She is also a freelance author of numerous 'dark and light' short stories, novels, articles, and very occasional dabbler of poetry. Like her, her blog, <http://morgenbailey.wordpress.com>, is consumed by all things literary. She also recently created five online writing groups and an interview-only blog. Her debut novel is the chick lit eBook *The Serial Dater's Shopping List*.

Synopsis of novel 'The Serial Dater's Shopping List'

31 men in 31 days – what could possibly go wrong?

Isobel MacFarlane is a recently-turned-40 journalist who usually writes a technology column for a newspaper based in Northampton, England, but her somewhat-intimidating boss, William, has set her the task of meeting 31 men, via a local internet dating site, all within a month. Having an active, though fruitless, social life with her friend and 'Health & Beauty' colleague Donna, she knows what she wants in a man, so creates a shopping list of dos and don'ts, and starts ticking them off as she meets Mr Could Be Right Except For, Mr Not Bad, Mr Oh My Goodness and Mr Oh So Very Wrong. Follow the ups (there are a few) and downs (there are many) of the dating process and intertwined with her experiences, get to know her colleague and family, including her niece Lola who, apart from being an amazing storyteller, can eat ambidextrously whilst wearing a Princess glove puppet on her right hand, and Baby, William's non-too-healthy African Grey parrot.

working on that one!) and because I'd left school (in the mid 80s) not having a clue what I wanted to do (and then spending my career as a secretary – very handy for typing quickly and organising my blog guests) so it was definitely a light bulb moment. That and the day I got my rescue dog.

A Rescue Dog, eh? That in itself tells us a lot about you as a compassionate person.

How do you react to a bad review of one of your books?

The first one's always hard and I have had one lady on Goodreads say she'd never read me again (having read my eShort Feeding the Father) which is a shame because she'd already read another eShort April's Fool and loved it. The only novel I have out so far (I have five others waiting for final edits), The Serial Dater's Shopping List, has been very well received which is a delight. You're never going to please everyone and I don't read poetry, historical or science-fiction / fantasy for example, although I think good writing shows in any genre.

While writing, do you drink coffee, tea or a glass of wine to stir up your creative juices?

Usually flavoured sparkling water, straight from the bottle (Sainsbury's do the best-shaped bottles because they have a skinny middle you can hold properly) although I do love tea. I'd like to like coffee but never have. As for wine, Lambrusco or Asti Spumanti is the only type I like (champagne's too dry) but I only have it in the house to take it to parties. I like something stronger, usually sweet, Disaronno is a current favourite.

What about food? Do you eat while you are writing?

Uh oh. You've found me out. I'm a snacker (Worcester Sauce crisps and M&Ms / Maltesers are my favourites) and to use my novelist friend Jane Wenham-Jones term, I definitely have a "writer's bottom". :) Actually it's not all rubbish, I'm hooked on Warburton's pitta pockets (because they're already cut in half so open up when you toast them) with Asda sandwich fillings such as chicken & sweetcorn or seafood in mayonnaise, and I do like their American style (shredded) salad with ranch sauce and bacon mini-cROUTONS.

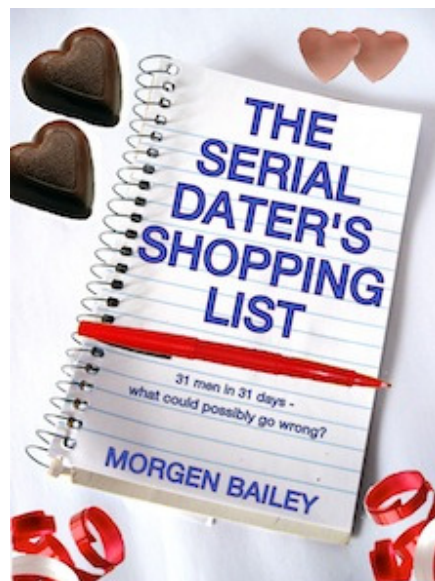
((I have to intercept right here, Morgen...that salad is my absolute favourite (((well done, Asda))), and every time I lock myself in a Hotel Room and write, along comes a couple of those bags with me, yum, yum, yum))!

I do balance it with walking my dog 2-3 times a day and walking 20-minutes each way to my Red Cross shop (I'm their 'book lady') once a week. I'm just back from a couple of days in London with a **lot** of walking and I didn't eat much so maybe I should just spend my days out with the dog because I'm usually doing something writing-related while we're out (editing, writing or reading, although I don't read enough and have loads of audiobooks to put on my iPod).

Do you think male writers have an easier time than female writers?

Not particularly. There do seem to be more established male writers than female writers although looking at my list of interviewees (<http://morganbailey.wordpress.com/blog-interviews>), out of the first 100, 56 are men and I think the rest (600+ on that site / <http://morgensauthorinterviews.wordpress.com>) are fairly evenly balanced.

Are you going to write your autobiography/memoirs one day?



Novelist, essayist, biographer and self-help author Marta Merajver-Kurlat has actually approached me about writing a biography of me. Initially I wasn't sure because really my life's been fairly uneventful (daughter of a photographer / housewife, although my father did do some photography for Roald Dahl and my mum was one of racing driver Stirling Moss' sister's horse racing grooms). Marta is convinced so I've said "yes". We shall see.

Which do you class as the most difficult occupational hazard to being a writer?

Most people would say the loneliness but I love that. I have my dog so I'm not alone but I've always been happy with my own company. Making money is certainly the hardest part because we're often asked to write for free (but then I've never paid any of my guests to write for me) and as **Jules Renard** is quoted as saying, "Writing is the only profession where no one considers you ridiculous if you earn no money."

What is your favourite bedtime drink?

Apart from (Tetley) tea, I like fruit teas (especially liquorice, Moroccan spice or winter spice) and hot chocolate. I usually have long days so I'm lucky that whatever I drink tends not to keep me awake.

Hmmm.....liquorice tea sounds nice.

What is your favourite line of Poetry?

I love comedy, especially Shel Silverstein, Wendy Cope, and Pam Ayres. I have two Shel poems listed at the end of <http://morgenbailey.wordpress.com/post-weekend-poetry> (It's Dark in Here which starts,

'I am writing these poems from inside a lion and it's rather dark in here'

and Snowball which starts

'I made myself a snowball, as perfect as could be.
I thought I'd keep it as a pet and let it sleep with me.'

Actually they're so short that that's about half the poems. :)

Who would play Morgen Bailey in a film of your life?

One of my nicknames is 'Steffi' because I have a Roman nose and long blonde hair like Steffi Graf. If it meant I'd get to be married to André Agassi I'd be quite happy. I've also been (kindly) compared with Darryl Hannah so either, or Helen Hunt, would be fine with me.

Well, I think you look like a young Sarah Ferguson.

What do you consider your biggest failure?

Erm... I have some regrets (like selling my first house for £35,000 just before the housing boom when it was worth £120,000 at its peak, but then I only paid £58,000 for the house I'm in now) but I don't think I've failed at anything – we learn from our mistakes, don't we. It's part of life.

Does your childhood have any influence on your writing?

That's a tough one because I remember very little from my childhood (other than Russell Hoban's 'The Mouse and His Child' being a favourite book) but I went on to read Roald Dahl's 'Tales of the Unexpected' and the TV series was definitely a weekend night highlight. My favourite kind of writing is tales with a twist. My favourite living author is Kate Atkinson (who I'd never heard of until I spotted a three-week course on her at a local university, it was great, especially as the third book covered was a collection of short stories). I'm finally going to meet her on Monday and I can't wait!

What makes you cringe?

Really appalling American 'comedy' films where they rely on slipping on banana skins or toilet humour as funny. A clever script does it for me – the movie 'Stranger than Fiction' is my favourite and despite having Will Ferrell, Emma Thompson, Dustin Hoffman and Queen Latifah, no-one's ever heard of it.

What makes you cry?

I'm tough in a crisis but I blub almost every time I go to the cinema – funny, romantic, sad, out comes the Kleenex (other brands are available).

What makes you laugh?

My dog (who thinks he's a child) and clever humour.

And finally:

How do you feel about being interviewed?

I love it as it makes me think about myself, although you're a tough cookie, Carrie King. You made me work today! :)

Thank you, Morgen!

You're very welcome, Carrie. Thank you. It's great having the spotlight shine in my eyes for once. I knew I should have brought my sunglasses.

Well done, Morgen and I just want to say a massive THANK YOU, not just for myself but for all the writers you have helped and no doubt will help in the future!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie King". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned in the lower-left area of the page.

P.S. And by the way, I hope you will be one of my guests at the **Première** of Joni-Pip (seems that will be a good five years hence, leaving plenty of time for both of us to save up for that posh frock)! C.K.