there will come a time

What does it take to let go?

CARRIE ARCOS

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST FOR OUT OF REACH
# Table of Contents

Discussion Questions 3  
Carrie Arcos Author Interview 4  
The Time Has Come: A Chat with Carrie Arcos 7  
Kirkus Review 11
Discussion Questions

1. Mark and his family are Filipino. How does that affect the story? Why do you think the author chose to tell this story from a Filipino perspective?

2. If you are not a twin yourself, do you think we can truly understand the level of loss that Mark is experiencing? What kind of relationships do you think are similar to the one he had with Grace?

3. Mark's personality is brusque and sometimes aggressive. Did this affect your opinion of him? Why or why not? Why do you think Mark keeps going to the bridge where she died?

4. Have you ever experienced a trauma that took more than just a few weeks to recover from? What was recovery like for you? Was there anything that helped you along your path?

5. How did Hanna help Mark along his path through grief? Why was she important? What about the other characters in the novel: Lily, Pete, Jenny, and Sebastian. What do they do for Mark? What does completing Grace's list do for Mark?

6. How is Mark's work as a bassist relevant in the novel? What does it tell us about Mark? Mark attends a performing arts high school. Why do you think the author chose that instead of a regular high school?

7. Does forgiveness play a role in the novel? Is it an important part of the story?

8. Grace is missing from this novel, but as Mark says, "I feel like I'm living for the both of us. I'm still here, so we're still here." Do you feel like Grace was present even though she was gone? Do you feel like you got to know Grace?

9. What do you miss about the ones you have lost? What do you miss right now – today?
Carrie Arcos Author Interview

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jeanbooknerd.com

Was there a defining moment during your youth when you realized you wanted to be a writer?

I don’t remember a defining moment, but I think it was always there. It must have slipped in when I first started reading, in between the pages, inside the lines. The dream somehow grabbed hold of me through my love of stories. Recently I found a letter I wrote to one of my HS English teachers. I was seventeen, graduating and reflecting on my life. My dream was to become a writer and a teacher. My biggest fear was that I wouldn’t be good enough. I became both.

Beyond your own work (of course), what is your all-time favorite book and why? And what is your favorite book outside of your genre? It’s always difficult to answer the question, what is my all time favorite book because that changes. There are books I read when I was younger that were my favorite and now they are no longer. Even books I read five years ago have risen and fallen. I’d say my all time favorite is one I haven’t read yet. (Yes, I know, sneaky way to avoid answering.) A favorite book outside of my genre is Love Medicine by Louise Erdrich.

In your book; There Will Come a Time, can you tell my Book Nerd community a little about it?

There Will Come a Time is essentially about a teen boy’s struggle to overcome the grief he feels at the loss of his twin sister. Mark Santos is a Filipino American, bass playing, skater seventeen year old who is angry and hurt and doesn’t really know how to handle it all. He tends to think he’s the only one who has lost someone because of the whole twin connection. He finds a journal that lists top five things his sister Grace wanted to do for the year and so he and their mutual friend, Hanna, decide to complete the list. Mark’s journey is learning not only how to grieve, but also how to work through painful experiences with his relationships and making right what he needs to. Ultimately it’s a story of forgiveness.

What are some of your current and future projects that you can share with us?

I’ve just finished a draft of what’ll hopefully go on to be my third YA Contemporary novel. It’s always a little unpredictable to see how it all plays out. I’m also interested in telling a story set in Zambia about a girl who finds something she’s willing to die for. We’ll see what happens.

What was the most surprising things you learned in creating Grace?

I didn’t have a handle on who Grace was when I began the novel. I thought since she really wasn’t in it, that it was Mark’s story, I didn’t need so much of her. But this was wrong. So much of who Mark is depends on Grace, and his loss of Grace makes her a more present force in the novel. She absent and we catch glimpses of her, but they are so important in telling Mark’s story.

If you could introduce Hannah to any character from another book, who would it be and why?
I would probably introduce Hanna to Rachel, the main character of my first novel, Out of Reach. They would get along and Hanna could be very helpful to Rachel and what she’s dealing with in terms of her own relationship with her brother Micah.

When asked, what’s the one question you always answer with a lie?

The question I always answer with a lie? My height. I say 5’2.” I’m really 5’1 3/4”

What’s the most memorable summer job you’ve ever had?

My most memorable summer job was running a small summer camp for kids. We took them all over the place. I basically got paid to play full time. It was awesome.

Who was your first boyfriend?

My first boyfriend was a guy named Kurt. He was a senior, and I was only a freshman. This is why my parents didn’t know about it. We both ran cross country and it was short and sweet. I think we lasted two months.

Tell me about your first kiss

My first kiss was at a friend’s birthday in the eighth grade. Someone had the lovely idea to play spin the bottle. I had to go inside a closet with one of my friends, a guy who I also had a huge crush on. It was awkward and we just kind of stood there, but he gave me a quick peck before the time was up. I left the closet triumphant.

When was the last time you cried?

I watched The Dallas Buyers Club recently. I teared up at that. A hard movie to watch, but powerful and illustrating the pain, ugliness, grace and beauty of humanity.

What decade during the last century would you have chosen to be a teenager?

My own, late 80s, early 90s. I loved it. And you can’t beat the movies or the music we had. Depeche Mode anyone?

What is your greatest adventure?

Raising kids is my greatest adventure at the moment. They are 11, 7 and 5. I love them, but it’s kind of crazy, especially around dinner and everyone wants to talk. Sometimes I want to fast forward to when they are teenagers and see how fun that’ll be. But by that time, I’ll want to rewind because it’s all happening so fast. Kids are awesome.

Top Ten list-things you would change about your high school years if you could travel in time

The amount of time I worried about what other people thought of me
I would have run for class president
I would have sang in the choir and tried out for drama
Not worried so much over getting As
Worn a bikini
Let that boy know I liked him
Talked to and get to know people I was afraid of
Not dated until senior year
Broken up with my boyfriend senior year
Taken more risks

THE TIME HAS COME: A CHAT WITH CARRIE ARCOS
6/17/14
Ratherbereadingblog.com

Happy Tuesday!

Last week in my Top 10 Tuesday post, I mentioned my 5-star reads of the year so far so I’m super thrilled to have Carrie Arcos on the blog today to chat about one of those 5-star reads (and a few other things, as well). THERE WILL COME A TIME hit bookshelves in April; it’s the story from the perspective of a teenager boy dealing with the tragic death of his twin sister. What struck me the most about this book was the balance. As much as we want to grieve when bad things happen, life continues outside our door, in our school, across the street and you just have to find a way to keep moving. I thought this was one of the truest depictions of all those complicated emotions. Our chat covers writing a male narrator, diversity in young adult lit, pre-release jitters, and more. Sit back + enjoy!

Psst… Carrie was kind enough to offer up TWO signed copies of her book so you’ll find that giveaway at the end.

Carrie, I am so thrilled to chat with you on Rather Be Reading! There Comes a Time was an emotional read for me – I cried many times on the subway during my commute – but what I loved most was that even though the story was about Mark’s grief over losing his
twin sister, present life was always knocking on his door. He couldn’t ignore it. What helped you to tap into Mark’s feelings about Grace?
Thank you so much for having me! And I’m glad you enjoyed Mark’s journey. I cried several times while writing certain scenes.

It’s funny because we think that we’re just pulling things out of the air sometimes when we write. We really have no idea how much our subconscious plays into it. I think my having lost a good friend to suicide a few months before I began Mark’s story for sure played a part in me having grief be a theme in the novel. At the time I didn’t realize that, but looking back I know it did.

I’m also really interested in sibling relationships. This could be because of my own experience of having brothers or maybe it’s because of my own children, I’m not sure.

For the twin dynamic, I did research and reflected on what it would be like to lose a twin. Many twins share an uncanny closeness, so I just tried to put myself in Mark’s shoes and walk a little ways with him.

The #DiversityinYA campaign has taken the internet by storm in the past couple of weeks, and I couldn’t help but think about Mark. On one hand, I think it’s great that I discovered Mark’s ethnicity once I picked up the book because his story is not defined by him being Filipino. But on the other, I wanted to shout from the rooftops CARRIE ARCOS IS FLYING UNDER THE RADAR WITH A POC MAIN CHARACTER! It’s awkward because you don’t want to exactly point it out because your book is so much more but I do think you deserve props. What was your reaction to the campaign?
I was totally behind it. I loved it. I should say, I love it, because it is still going. The site Diversity in YA had me do a guest post right before the campaign began, so I was thankful for that. But yeah, I do feel the book is flying a little under the radar at the moment.

The issue of lack of diversity is really thread through all aspects of storytelling in the US. Look at film and TV, adult books, it’s all about the same. It’s systematic and it’ll only change when values change.

I want to write stories that reflect the world I live in, the world my children live in.

I really loved your blog post about release day jitters. I think a lot of readers are under the impression that once you are published by a mega-publisher, you are super confident about your work and the reactions your readers will have to it. But, shock of all shocks, authors are humans too! (I feel like this is an US Weekly segment.) Was there any time during the writing process for There Will Come a Time that you felt frustrated and didn’t think things were working?
It’s funny because most of the time writing is such a solitary thing. You’re at a desk or sitting in a library or a coffee shop. You’re alone. But suddenly when the book is out, you’re also this public persona who needs to be a good public speaker, witty, charming, etc… But it’s all good. I get so nervous, but as soon as I’m in front of the mic, I’m on.

It took a while in the beginning stages of There Will Come a Time to figure out what the book was really about and who Mark was. I had a loose idea, but I couldn’t get it. Once I connected him to loss and a family member, it just clicked. I wrote the paragraph that comes at the end of ch 1 about grief and knew I had his voice.

What’s one thing you would like readers to get out of There Will Come a Time?
Just one? Hmm… Most of the time the only way to get through the horribly difficult times in life is through.

Like Grace, do you create little lists of things you want to accomplish? What’s one thing you want to make sure you do before the year is over?
Yes. I’m a total list girl. I don’t always write them down, but I have a mental list of things I want to accomplish each day.

Before the year is over, I’d like to sell my third book. This isn’t totally in my control, so we’ll see what happens.

I want to attend the school in your book. All the arts, all the time and I loved the big project that the characters were working on together. Mark has such a passion for music, and it helps him wade through the harder times. Do you have a similar release?
I so wanted to attend an arts high school too. I admit I was kind of like Jenny, Mark’s step mom, when she romanticizes what the experience must be like. After talking to kids who go to arts schools, it’s not completely like that. But what is there is the passion for sure.

Music is one of my passions. I’ve sung off and on, and that has been helpful. I’d also say writing and reading are other ways I feel my way through the difficult times.

You were recently on a panel called “Young Adult Fiction: Outside Looking In” at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books. Was there a particular discussion during the panel that has stuck with you?
One of my friends came to the panel and afterwards was like, “I had no idea writing YA could be so much like therapy.” Ha! Our panel was a little on the heavy side. It was so great to be a part
of such a great festival and meeting the other authors. I particularly enjoyed meeting Deb Caletti because she has a career that I aspire to.

Mark definitely seemed like a guy I would have been friends with in high school. Did you enjoy shifting to the male POV for this book? Who are some memorable male narrators in your reading life?
I loved writing Mark. At first I wondered if I could do it, get inside a male 17 yr old, but you know, teen guys are human like anyone else. And I’d also like to say they are all different. I really hate how the male teen gets stereotyped into a horny, sex crazed adolescent. I mean, sure I knew guys like that in HS, but not every guy is like that. And many guys are very sensitive and have a deep emotional core. They just may not be as verbal about it as girls.

Some memorable male narrators?

Congrats on your writers residency opportunity in June! Do you already have something you are working on or are you going to start fresh? What are the benefits to locking yourself away with other writers? (Please take some pictures!)
Thank you so much. I’m incredibly excited to go to Hedgebrook on Whidbey Island. When I applied, I had to explain what I’d be working on, but that was a year ago. So…I’m deviating a little from the plan. I’m not completely sure what I’m working on yet. I have some ideas. Maybe I’ll work on a couple.

I’ve never taken this much time away by myself to work on my writing. Usually I’m juggling my other responsibilities as mom, wife, teacher, etc… So I am excited to see where it takes me as I confront my self.

I will for sure take pictures. But I won’t post them until after. I don’t even think they have internet!

I wish I could come to NYC. I’m a native New Yorker, born in Albany. I have another YA contemporary that I don’t want to say too much about except that I hope I’ll be able to share this story with readers one day.

Thanks so much for taking the time to chat, Carrie!

http://ratherbereadingblog.com/the-time-has-come-a-chat-with-carrie-aros
A sad and sweet story about coming to terms with loss.

When his twin sister, Grace, is killed in a car accident, gifted 17-year-old musician Mark is cut adrift. In an honest and contemplative first-person narrative that picks up a few months after her death, Mark tries to figure out how to function again in a world that no longer includes his other half. The relationships that remain—with his estranged mother, his beautiful neighbor, his quirky classmates at the arts magnet school he attends—are sorely tested by his tendency to emotionally shape-shift between ghost and porcupine, but they offer opportunities for him to practice processing his grief with the same persistence and concentration he brings to practicing his bass guitar. There can be no tidy Brady Bunch ending for Mark; his twin will always be missing, and the best he can hope for is to get himself “[o]n [the] way to happy.” But inspired by a list of things Grace had hoped to accomplish during their senior year, he ventures out of his introspection to take a few risks and start living again, and in so doing, he achieves a measure of peace. Mark’s ethnic identity—he and his family are Filipino—provides cultural texture for the tale.

Readers need not have lost someone dear to appreciate Mark’s odyssey, as Arcos’ compelling and likable characters will draw them in. (Fiction. 12-18)