

Family and fiction

What is it like growing up with a romance writer? **Robyn Carr's** daughter, Jamie, discovered as an adult that her mother took traits and stories from real people and incorporated them into her characters. These days, Jamie is often spoiled for Robyn's books long before they come out, as her mother asks her for advice while writing crime and law enforcement.

A conversation with Robyn Carr and Jamie

Robyn Carr: Jamie read one of my books while we were on vacation together. And she said, “Oh my God, everything we said growing up is in this book.”

The personal lives of romance writers often end up in their books. . .

Robyn Carr and her daughter Jamie discuss the lines between fact and fiction.

Jamie: So I'll read the book and I'll see things that I've said, things that Dad said, things that we've done. I could pick out who the characters most resemble of people in our lives. And it's almost difficult sometimes to grasp who the character is supposed to be versus who I think they truly are. But it's fun. It's fun. When I was a kid I never read any of her stuff growing up because—

Robyn Carr: It was R-rated.

Jamie: —and disturbing to be your child. But I would come home from school and Mom would say, “Hey, let me tell you what Beth did today.” And she would go off on this rant and I’m thinking, “My goodness is Aunt Beth, okay?” And she’s like, “No, no, Beth in my book. Not Aunt Beth, but Beth in the book.” So that’s kind of how growing up was always—

Robyn Carr: Oh, Beth is in jail.

Jamie: It was always an adventure because she’d start telling you a story, okay, is this fact or is this fiction? Are we in the book conversation? And then she always ruins everything for me, like especially now. She’ll call me and run plots by me and “Well, how does this work?” And “Do you think I could pull it off like this?” And then that shoots—the whole book’s gone.

Robyn Carr: No, what I like to do is say, “Where are you in the book?” And she tells me and I say, “Well, did you get to the part where the dog died?” “No, I didn’t actually.” I mean—

Jamie: The dog dies?

Robyn Carr: The dog died.

Robyn often turns to Jamie for expert advice.

Jamie: I am a sergeant with the police department, out in Las Vegas. And she calls me all the time, with questions.

[. . .]

Robyn Carr: Sexting, that’s my last question.

Jamie: That was your last question. But that’s not in a book right now.

Robyn Carr: It is too.

Jamie: Not one that I've read.

Robyn Carr: I know.

Jamie: But there you just ruined it for me, didn't you?

Robyn Carr: I told you I was working on an angle.

Jamie: She was asking if sexting is illegal or a crime. And then it turned into something else. If you took a picture of somebody and then—

Robyn Carr: Photoshopped it.

Jamie: Photoshopped it and then forwarded it on. So she constantly asks questions about what crimes would be. One of her most recent books, there's, like, a battery assault in there so clarifying the difference for her there. And, um, yeah.

Robyn Carr: All of the time.

How often do you think writers draw directly on their friends and family members for characters and stories?

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