



A CONVERSATION WITH 2015 CILIP CARNEGIE MEDAL WINNER TANYA LANDMAN

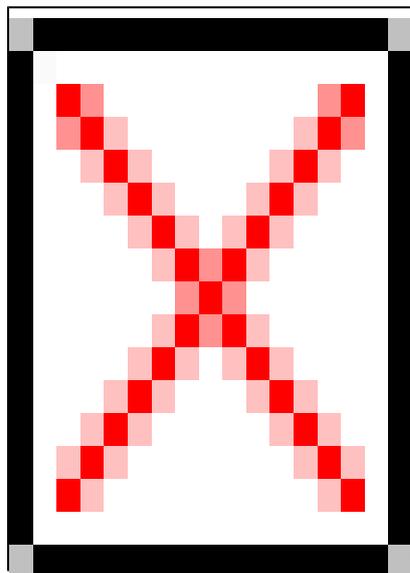
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The winning author of **Buffalo Soldier** in conversation with her agent.

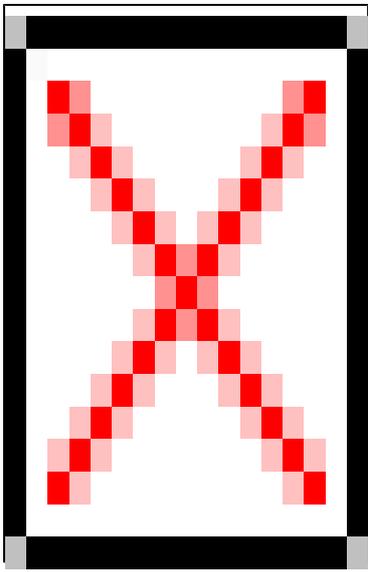


Tanya Landman was one of the first writers to be represented by the Literary Agency [Fraser Ross Associates](#) [3] back in 2002. 'We knew immediately that Tanya was a born story teller, and she worked so hard right from the start,' says **Lindsey Fraser**. 'People are surprised that an Edinburgh-based agency represents a Devon-based writer' but the distance doesn't cause us any problems at all. Email's great' but the phone is even better.'

This conversation between the two took place once Tanya Landman reached home after the CILIP Carnegie medal presentation.

LF: So here you are, the CILIP Carnegie medal-winning author Tanya Landman. Congratulations! I know how thrilled you are, but what stands out as the most exciting part of the experience

TL: One of the very special things about being on the Carnegie medal shortlist is the [Shadowing site](#) [4]. My first YA novel [[Apache](#) [5]] was shortlisted in 2008 and the disappointment of not winning was definitely dissipated by the knowledge that the book was being read and talked about by the young people for whom I'd written it. I know you've sometimes advised me to step away when some of the shadowers weren't that polite about [Buffalo Soldier](#) [6], but I couldn't - I was glued to it. Those shadowers are thinking and talking about the books - and even when they don't like what they've read, it's such a wonderful thing. I met some of them through Jo de Guia of Victoria Park Books in Hackney and the level of energy coming off the students was extraordinary - you just want to bottle it. These



youngsters are reading closely, critically, with a sharp eye, it's incredibly refreshing.

There's so much energy, enthusiasm and wit. The Shadowing experience gives them a voice and for a writer to get so much feedback - well, it's a privilege.

LF: You mentioned in your acceptance speech that **Buffalo Soldier** had originally been intended as a novel set in Greece during World War 2. What on earth happened?

TL: Well, two things happened. The first was that I realised that there were already so many good books covering that period. I adore **Captain Corelli's Mandolin**, and to an extent was inspired by that novel, but I wanted my book to contribute something new to the narrative of the time, and I wasn't convinced by the book I was writing. It may yet happen, but the time wasn't right. The second was that Walker Books held their nerve, trusted me to return to the world I'd discovered when I wrote **Apache**. I know it wasn't a straightforward one for them - publishers don't like big gaps between books - but I think my editor, Caz Royds, must have heard the desperation in my voice. She continued to hold her nerve through a couple of drafts - in one of which Queen Victoria played a key role, believe it or not.

LF: So an editor is important to you?

TL: Yes. An editor is incredibly important. It was Caz who told me that Queen Victoria would have to go. And thank goodness she did. I'm so close to the book - particularly my YA novels - that my perspective can be very weird. It's like having your nose pressed against the walls of a building, so your view is distorted. Caz was the one standing back, able to see the wider picture. Just as you'd never put on a stage play or make a film without a director, I couldn't be a novelist without an editor. Emma Lidbury edits my younger fiction and although those books are less complex, they need a steady editorial hand too.

LF: You've a new book coming out in the autumn - **Hell and High Water** is your 31st in ten years as a published writer. Do you worry about running out of ideas?

TL: No! I just need to find the time to write them. **Hell and High Water** is set in an imagined location near to where I live - though the American West provides a backdrop of sorts, so I haven't abandoned that world entirely... It's a mystery thriller, I suppose and I hope people enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. **The Poppy Fields Murder Mysteries** and **Sam Swann Movie Mysteries** are great fun to write, and I really enjoyed the William Popidopolis novels - but these 'big' books take hold of me and don't let go. I need to get on with the next one, come to think of it...

LF: Yes, you do! But before you head for the keyboard, can you sum up why this Carnegie medal means so much?

TL: **Buffalo Soldier** is a challenging book. It was challenging to write, to edit and to publish. Every author in the world knows the feeling of anxiety on publication day - will anybody buy my book, or read my book? I'll be honest - I was really flat around the time it was published. Social media is a wonderful thing, but it's a lonely place when you're not part of the conversation. I was very aware that other novels were generating more noise and excitement at the time. But

then gradually people I respected began to talk about **Buffalo Soldier** in positive terms. Thoughtful, considered reviews appeared on various blogs. Some of them were positively effusive. [Books for Keeps \[6\]](#) gave it a great review. It was so heartening. And then I suppose it was the word of mouth thing - I began to see copies in bookshops, individual librarians and independent booksellers took to it, young people started sending me messages about it. Being nominated for the Carnegie medal was a huge thing for me, because it meant that the book was being noticed by librarians, and therefore reaching readers through their local libraries. I've been so excited when I've won prizes in the past. I'd love to win every prize going - of course I would! But the process of the judging, and the rigour of those librarians in their decision-making makes the Carnegie medal one I am particularly thrilled to have been awarded. I wake up every morning smiling!

Buffalo Soldier [6] is published by Walker Books, £7.99 pbk.

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