

Let the River Run

ROBYN CARR ON WRITING A LONG-RUNNING SERIES

By Stephanie Klose

ROBYN CARR'S HUMOR-TINGED combination of romance and women's fiction has landed her on bestseller lists (*New York Times* 14 times, *USA Today* 16 times and *Publishers Weekly* eight times) and on keeper shelves around the world. Her long-running Virgin River series in particular continues to strike a chord with readers who crave the kind of small-town connections and happily-ever-afters that her books provide.

Carr is kicking off 2012 with three new books, which will be the 17th, 18th and 19th in the series. The first, *Hidden Summit*, which came out from Mira in January, features a character who's new to town: Connor Danson. After he witnessed a murder in Sacramento, his hardware store was burned down and his life threatened. He's the caretaker to his sister Katie and her 5-year-old twins. The district attorney is concerned that someone is going to try to use them to get to Connor, so he sends Katie and the children to Vermont and Connor to hide out in Virgin River. Connor takes a job at Haggery Construction, where Leslie Petruso is running the office. The two claim that the only thing they have in common is that they're both through with love, but odds are good that's not the case.

In the second book, *Redwood Bend*, which is out this month, Connor's sister comes to Virgin River for a visit. Katie Malone and her sons get a flat tire on their way into town and are rescued by a knight on a shining motorcycle. Though she and Dylan Childress feel an immediate attraction, they each have other plans for their futures.

The third book, *Sunrise Point*, which will be released in May, has a heroine who first appeared in *Bring Me Home for Christmas* (Nov. '11). Then, Nora Crane was the young single mother of a newborn and a 2-year-old. Now she's doing whatever she can to support her family, including working at Cavanaugh's orchard. Tom Cavanaugh has come home to take over the orchard. He's looking to get married and has a very specific idea of the kind of woman he wants to settle down with — and Nora isn't it. But for some reason, he can't stop thinking about her.

Do you have favorite characters from the series?

Mel and Jack. They're the anchors for the series. And I love the couple from the third book in 2012 [*Sunrise Point*]. He is so wonderful as a hero. I love the gentle, warm heroes more than the bad boys. And I love Nora Crane. She's had so many struggles, but she's still optimistic. She's the kind of person I want to be.



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Hunting features prominently in the Virgin River books. Are you a hunter yourself? Never. I've never done it. I'd never aim at anything.

What questions do readers ask you most often?

The two questions I'm asked most often are: Is Virgin River a real town and where is it? It's a real place — buried in the Humboldt County, Calif., mountains — but it's a fictional town, of course. The question that made me laugh the hardest was the woman who wrote asking if I was going to be adding to the "Vagina River" series.

The *Virgin River* series will be 19 books strong by the middle of 2012. Did you have any idea what you were getting into when you started? When I started the series, the publisher was publishing one book a year from me. So I started out thinking it was my one book for the year. Then I got to where Jack's buddies show up and I thought I might have more than one book — I thought I might have four. Then, instead of a proposal, I just wrote four more books. That turned out to be a mistake, because no editor is going to read 1,200 pages, so I had to go back and write the proposals anyway, but at least the books were done.

Do you think you'll continue writing the series indefinitely? Or do you have plans to stop? How will you decide when it's time? We've been watching for signs of reader fatigue. If people had become bored after six books, it would have stopped there. We keep an eye on reviews and reader comments and look for their reactions. I get a lot of letters from readers — if they were more negative than positive, or if people stopped writing, that would be a sign.

The real turning point is going to be my personal enthusiasm. I'm still having fun.

How do you keep track of everything that's happened in the series? I have a big notebook. I do forget things, but readers always point out my mistakes.

Have reader comments ever influenced what you write? The Christmas book for 2012 will be Patrick Rheardon's story, the youngest Rheardon brother. I resisted — he barely says 10 words through the whole series! — but people kept writing letters asking for his book.

With the Christmas book, you'll release four *Virgin River* books in 2012. How do you produce so much? I work a lot. I work every day all day. I only break for chores or the rare lunch with my daughter or friends. It's a big strain, but it's a lot of fun. It's the most fun.

What do you like to do when you're not writing? *RT* readers love to get a glimpse into their favorite authors' private lives. I know. I wish I had one! I've destroyed a couple of houses trying to decorate them. I cringe when online sites ask for recipes. I can't even boil an egg. Writing is what I do. It's the only thing I can do.

Do you have any *Virgin River* news you'd like to share with *RT* readers? I'm going to spin off the series for a couple of books in 2013 with a character introduced in *Sunrise Point*. It'll be set in a town on the California coast. I've done mountains and I've done valleys, so it'll be nice to get out to the coast.

It doesn't necessarily mean no more *Virgin River*. I expect to do more *Virgin River*. I'm very much at home there, but I think it's going to be a nice change. Plus, it's not so far away that other characters can't make an appearance. ✧

For more about the author, check out her website: RobynCarr.com.

➤ **Virgin River**
4/2007

➤ **Shelter Mountain**
5/2007

➤ **Whispering Rock** 6/2007

➤ **A Virgin River Christmas**
11/2008

➤ **Second Chance Pass** 2/2009

➤ **Temptation Ridge** 3/2009

➤ **Paradise Valley** 4/2009

➤ "Under the Christmas Tree" in *That Holiday Feeling*
10/2009

➤ **Forbidden Falls**
1/2010

➤ **Angel's Peak**
2/2010

➤ **Moonlight Road** 2/2010

➤ "Midnight Confessions" in *Midnight Kiss*
11/2010

➤ **Promise Canyon** 1/2011

➤ **Wild Man Creek** 2/2011

➤ **Harvest Moon** 3/2011

➤ **Bring Me Home for Christmas**
11/2011

➤ **Hidden Summit** 1/2012

➤ **Redwood Bend** 3/2012

➤ **Sunrise Point** coming 5/2012

