



Carolina Girl

Virginia Kantra

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Meet the Fletchers of Dare Island

Ambitious Meg, the daughter who never looked back

Steady Matt, the son who stayed

And rebel Luke, the Marine who thought he'd never return

Meg Fletcher spent her childhood dreaming of escaping Dare Island—her family's home for generations. So after she landed a high-powered job in New York City, she left and never looked back. But when she loses both her job and the support of her long-term, live-in boyfriend, she returns home to lick her wounds and reevaluate her life.

Helping out her parents at the family inn, she can't avoid the reminders of the past she'd rather forget—especially charming and successful Sam Grady, her brother's best friend. Their one disastrous night of teenage passion should have forever killed their childhood attraction, but Sam seems determined to reignite those long-buried embers. As Meg discovers the man he's become, she's tempted to open her vulnerable heart to him. But she has no intention of staying on Dare Island—no matter how seductive Sam's embrace might be...

Carolina Girl Details

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Author : Virginia Kantra

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From Reader Review Carolina Girl for online ebook

JoAnn Ross says

I'm a long time Virginia Kantra fan girl because every time I read one of her books, she reminds me why I read romance. Her voice is lush, yet smart and strong at the same time. As lush as the wonderful Dare Island where her newest series is set, and as smart and strong as her characters. Her families, and the situations they face, are also so realistic, I feel as if I know her characters personally. They're people I continue to think about long after I get to the inevitable, perfect happy ending.

Meg, sister to Matt and Luke Fletcher, spent her life planning to escape Dare Island, where not only does everyone know your name, they know everything about your life. Well, almost everything. In this case, she and Sam Grady, her childhood friend (who's also her brother's best friend), have a secret. A secret night of teenage passion she's been determined to forget. She's also gained everything she dreamed of: a high powered career in NYC, an equally high-powered boyfriend, and a condo in the city even I've fantasized about from time to time.

Then, after her world is rocked when she loses her job due to a company merger, needing time to lick her wounds, regroup, and figure out how to climb her way back, she follows that inevitable yellow brick road back home.

Sam Grady is everything a hero should be. Comfortable in his skin, determined to do the right thing, despite the odds stacked against him, even as he offers Meg comfort and support, a touch of bad boy edge and charm make him a walking testosterone bomb that threatens to blow up not only Meg's carefully constructed life plans but her own view of herself. Their chemistry is apparent from the beginning, and their banter is wonderful. It's obvious they belong together. But, in a Kantra book, choices aren't easy and even as characters grow, they remain true to themselves.

Although Meg comes to realize that her mother wasn't at all the subservient Marine spouse she'd always thought her to be, she also knows that she wouldn't be satisfied with a solely domestic life on Dare Island. Just as Sam knows that as much as he loves Meggie, Dare Island is where he belongs.

As they work their way through these life obstacles, the secondary characters are dealing with their own issues, including a threat that brings the entire family, and Sam, together to battle.

I loved this book for so many reasons and believe it's Kantra's best, ever. That's the good part. The bad part is that I don't know how I'm going to wait until next March for *Carolina Man*, when Marine Luke Fletcher returns home from war and his complex, absolutely endearing ten year old daughter who was a surprise legacy from a teenage romance.

Angela says

6 January 2016: \$1.99 on Kindle

Lizzie says

So if Virginia Kantra is my Nora Roberts fix, then this book is the equivalent of Inner Harbor.

In other news, I loathe female protagonists written as 'work-committed city girls leading empty lives in *condos* who need a hometown hero and a clapboard house with four bedrooms to realign their priorities.' The whole book is a giant wank about how Meg foolishly seeks happiness in New York City and a high-powered job, which requires writing Meg as an absolute idiot who thinks her boyfriend's signature on the condo docs is a substitute for warmth or commitment. The book does get a 21st century update when Meg refuses to leave her profession entirely for the hero's pleasure, but by that point I was so fed up with the inane characterization I did not really care.

Helyce says

Previously reviewed here: <http://smexybooks.com/2013/06/review-...>

Meg Fletcher grew up on Dare Island and spent her youth doing everything she could to make sure she ended up anywhere else. And she succeeded. She lives in New York, has a great, high paying job, owns a condo with her boyfriend of six years, and is living life exactly how she planned...far away from Dare Island. But when she arrives at work one morning to learn that she's been "let go" her world is turned upside down. When she find out that her boyfriend knew about the reorganization and didn't fight for her position, she is furious. With few options, she finds herself on a plane, back home to Dare Island.

Sam Grady grew up on Dare Island as well. The son of a highly successful real estate mogul, Sam didn't want for much-except perhaps the attention of his father. By the time he was a teenager, his dad had been married several times and was so into his work, Sam was left to fend for himself. When the Fletcher's moved to Dare Island, Sam became friends with Meg's older brother Matt and spent so much time with the Fletcher's that he became an honorary member of the family. As they grew up, Sam was very aware of Meg, but their one night of teenaged fumbling, pushed them apart.

Now, Sam and Meg are back on Dare Island and no matter how much time has passed, Sam is determined to make right what happened so many years ago.

Carolina Girl picks up where Carolina Home ended. The Fletcher's are still recovering from the accident that put Meg's mom in the hospital. She'd come home to help out at the inn, but headed back to New York once things settled down. Unbeknownst to her, the company she'd been working for had done some reorganizing and on the day she returns to work, she finds out she doesn't have a job anymore. After working so hard to get away from Dare Island, she realizes she has no choice but to head home until she can figure out what to do next.

What Meg didn't count on, was Sam Grady. He's also back on the island helping out his dad who is recovering from a stroke. Sam and Meg have some history that includes one night together, in their teens, after which Sam ignored Meg and neither brought up the incident again. But Meg's always had a thing for Sam and Sam has never forgotten Meg. Even after all these years, he still feels guilty for what happened and

is determined to make it right.

This second chance love story hit all the right buttons for me. Sam is successful and sexy and I couldn't wait for him to soften up and crack that shell that Meg had around her. I didn't like Meg at first-I didn't really understand why she hated life on the island so much. Her childhood sounded idyllic once they settled on Dare Island. Yes, she did have to help out a lot with the family owned inn and I can certainly see her wanting to get away from it all while in her teens. But for me, the sense of family came through more strongly, and it seemed Meg forgot that part of it all and chose to distance herself completely from not only the inn, but her family. Everything she'd done up until her getting fired had kept her away not only from the island, but from people who loved and cared about her. Though she claims to be happy, she starts to question what she really wants once she's home.

Sam has never forgotten his one night with Meg or forgiven himself for how he handled the "morning after". Now that he has Meg close, he wants to make it right. I loved how Sam went about wooing Meg. He took it slow, and made the most of the moments he was given. He knew that Derek was not the right man for Meg and though he set his sights on doing everything he could, he was patient and didn't push...too much.

The author really took her time before putting these two together and it was really starting to get on my nerves until I realized that perhaps she didn't want to make Meg a cheater. Yes, there are a few stolen kisses, but this couple doesn't truly get physical until Meg has ended her relationship with Derek. But once she does, she does not hold back.

There is a lot of reflection in this story-Meg with her mother and Sam with his father. So many misunderstandings that could have been cleared up years before with simple honesty, but no one was willing to make the first move. Though there is focus on the romance and building the relationship between Sam and Meg, there is also some much needed healing in the relationship between Sam and his father.

This is what I call a 'feel good' romance. I love the setting, I love that it has a family at its center but nothing came too easy for the couple and they had real things to deal with in order to be together in the end. I'm very much looking forward to what the author plans to do in book three which will be Luke's book. He's off in Afghanistan and has left his young daughter in the care of his parents. We don't know too much about him but I have a feeling his story may be the more emotional of the three.

Jane Stewart says

2 ½ stars. I wasn't smiling but it kept my interest.

I did not enjoy Meg. I did not enjoy being in her head with her doubts and concerns. She's irritated at everything. She always wants to get away, to leave. She's rude.

I did not get to see a relationship develop. They've been apart for 18 years. She comes to town and Sam is always there, as if he's always been in love with her and waiting for her to come back. It was too automatic. I don't know why he liked her or how he grew to love her. She treated him bad. I did not like the way Meg held a grudge for 18 years. She had a crush on him in high school. One night he was drunk and she seduced him. After that he did not call. She acts like he committed a major crime. It's not a crime if a guy is not into her. That wasn't the case. He had different reasons but nothing worth a grudge. I was irritated that Meg kept her anger/grudge going so long - a mountain out of a molehill.

There were two sex scenes. They were short, not much detail, if that matters. The first sex scene happens in a hotel. Afterwards Meg says we have to leave. She didn't have to leave, but this was the way she acted throughout the story. Apparently she enjoyed it but she stopped it. The reader doesn't get to enjoy love and pleasure now that they're together because Meg won't. It was the story's emotional vacancy.

The best part was Meg's wonderful loving family. Family things were more interesting than the Sam-Meg relationship.

AUDIOBOOK NARRATOR:

The narrator Sophie Eastlake was good for women and general narration, but not men. I did not like her weird male voices.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Unabridged audiobook length: 8 hrs and 31 mins. Swearing language: mild, other than s*** was used once - I think. Sexual language: none to mild. Number of sex scenes: two. Setting: current day Dare Island off North Carolina, and New York City. Book copyright: 2013. Genre: contemporary romance.

Brandy Painter says

I have a soft spot for stories about people who reunite after years apart and this is a good one. I really liked both Meg and Sam as characters too. I identified with Meg's need to achieve and be independent, and while I found her attitude about her boyfriend sometimes frustrating, it was completely understandable. I like how Sam is a man unafraid to face past mistakes. I also loved how clear it was that his charming confidence did not mean he didn't have massive insecurities to deal with. He's an interesting parallel to Meg's nephew, Josh (son of Matt from first book), and I enjoyed how that was touched on a bit. I like how the stories of all the Fletcher family continued to be important. The conflict between Meg and Sam in the end was one that worked well in the context of their story and had a quick enough turn around and a compromise from both parties involved that it made me ridiculously happy. I preferred this one slightly to the first book, mostly because of how much I really liked Meg and Sam. As in Carolina Home, this is so much more than a romance. The Fletcher family is an intricate part of this story as well and I love seeing this family interact. Sam's family also plays a big part in his life and those scenes were excellent as well.

(I'm still far more interested in Josh and Thalia than is probably normal for an adult reader. I can't help it. I love YA and I work with high schoolers and now I'm FASCINATED by the idea of a YA novel set in the Outerbanks, that's not a summer vacation story, but about the kids actually growing up there. Set in winter so we just avoid the whole summer tourist dynamic. Someone please make this happen.)

Very much looking forward to reading Carolina Man which comes out Tuesday! I usually save my adult fiction reading for Friday nights, but I may be tempted to squeeze this one in on release day if my review schedule allows for it. This may be a case where I decide to say forget the stupid schedule.

Grace says

Maaaaaybe 3.5/5? More than 3 but definitely not 4. I liked Meg and I liked Sam, but I wasn't as into their

relationship. Sam pushed a little too hard for me, I think. It made me slightly uncomfortable.

Otherwise, I did enjoy this. I love the family stuff and I appreciated how the city/small town stuff was handled (the resolution was fast and predictable but it was still far preferable to how these things usually go).

Angelina M. says

Virginia Kantra's *Carolina Girl* was the perfect book to start (and finish!) on Mother's Day. A satisfying romance about how a daughter keeps her loyalty to her loving family while staying true to herself, this book kept me turning the pages to not only discover how she and our hero would get together, but also what choices she would make concerning her family.

Meg Fletcher is a Harvard-educated VP of public relations living in New York City and loving it. But when she is fired from her job, she decides to return home to the seaside town of Dare Island, North Carolina to take a break from her boyfriend (more like a roommate!) and take care of her mother, who is recovering from a car accident. Her brother's best friend, Sam Grady, picks her up at the airport to quite openly let her know that he's still thinking of the one time they were together as teenagers. She wants to stay far away from the enticing Sam Grady, focus on her job search, and get her butt out of the bed-and-breakfast her parents run and back to the isle of Manhattan.

Generally, I am not interested in the angst of family-oriented romances. But there are no hidden ugly secrets in Kantra's romance, simple a realistic look at how you jibe the needs of your family with your own. As a girl who moved away from a loving family, this story resonated with me. And made me cry. When the powerful, smart Meg tells her parents that she just didn't want them to be disappointed in her, there were waterworks over my Mother's Day breakfast in bed. Sam, the hero, is the perfect balance of swaggeringly hot and completely devoted. His self-possessed loyalty to Meg and her family is completely enticing. I highly recommend this smart, emotionally complex and entertaining read.

Miriam Caraway says

Upon finishing Virginia Kantra's *Carolina Girl*, I realized that Dorothy had it right – sometimes there's just no place like HOME. Meg Fletcher's "yellow brick road" centers on her rediscovery of just what is important in her life – power, prestige and status with her job/relationship in the Big Apple or the revelation that family, community and the seduction of Dare Island is what she really needs in her life. Combined with all this is Sam Grady, her older brother Matt's best friend and her first love as a teenager. Sam has harbored his desire for Meg over the years and when she returns home to help with her mother's recovery from a serious accident, he's determined to show Meg that he's never seen her as only Matt's little sister but as a woman of strength, character and as the first - and last - love of his life.

I simply adore the way Virginia writes family/community relationships – strong, smart, sassy and very realistic – and this book is a prime example of her talent. *Carolina Girl* is the second in her Dare Island series and while it's easily read as a stand-alone, I highly recommend the first book, *Carolina Home*, as well. Now comes the hard part – waiting for the release of Luke Fletcher's (the youngest brother) story in *Carolina Man*. As the much-loved beach music song says...*Carolina Girl – Best in the World!!!*

Ami says

3.75 stars rounded up

I always love "second chances" story. So I thought, with Meg and Sam having history between them eighteen years ago (he was her first kiss, first sex partner, first love), the romance was better than the first book. I thought they had chemistry and I surely loved to found way back to love.

I liked Sam, I thought he was indeed charming, but at the same time he knew he made a mistake all those years ago, and Sam was willing to make things right. Having said that, I did experience an upset moment when Sam (view spoiler). Lucky that his words to Meg in way of groveling were quite good *lol*.

I didn't warm out to Meg though, there was something in her attitude and way of thinking that just made her a 'detached' character. Maybe because she was quick to judge other people's decision (Matt marrying Allison after only knowing her for short time, Sam's sister Chelsea marrying in very young age, even her own mother's decision to stay at Dare Island).

Having said that, I didn't really like the principle of "*big city is bad vs. small town is good*" theme. I like the idea of big city girl who are restless and dreams of living in small town because it means that that kind of heroine does want to live in small down. However, here, I thought Meg did strive in big city, despite her love life going nowhere. She said several time that New York was her home. Yes, she made wrong judgment of her mother's decision but deep down, I felt like Meg actually liked the dynamic of big city and I didn't see anything wrong with that. Big city has its allure too, you know?

So I wasn't exactly happy that the plot seemed to push Meg to go back to the island under bad circumstances and not because she truly wants it. Despite the compromise that she made in the end. Besides, why is it the girl that should make the compromise?!? *#justsayin'*.

D.B. Reynolds says

Kantra writes wonderful romance!

Sarah says

4 Stars

My Thoughts

Who doesn't love a great second chance romance?

To be honest this book was pretty standard for this type of romance novel. The large family, the small town setting, and the couple that have been in love with each other since high school; but I still very much enjoyed it.

For Meg's whole life she has been trying to do the best that she can, and be the best she can be. She wanted choices, she didn't want to end up like her Mother; following her husband around and doing what he wanted to do. Meg studied hard, was accepted and graduated Harvard. At the beginning of the book, she now is finding herself unemployed from a job she has given all her time to over the last twelve years. Once arriving home to the condo she just bought with her boyfriend, he suggests that she goes home to Dare Island, North Carolina until she decides what to do. That is where the story begins.

Once Meg arrives home, she almost immediately runs into Sam. He is her brother's best friend, and her first crush back from high school. They two of them have a history and Sam is interested starting things up with her again. Meg is still in a relationship with her boyfriend and has some very difficult decisions to make; not just about the boyfriend but also about what she wants to do for work and what direction she wants her life to go.

I adored both Meg and Sam. This is the second book in a series and we had already met both Meg and Sam in the first book. I read 'Carolina Home' over a year ago and I remember that I didn't care much for Meg at the time, but much like real people (and not just fictional characters) sometimes it takes getting to really know someone before you make a decision about if you like them or not. You come to realize in this book that Meg is a lot more complex and had a lot going on.

Sam I adored right off the bat. He was a typical rich playboy but wasn't a snob.

All of the characters in this story (and series) are have well defined personalities, and with great stories of their own.

There are some other story arc weaving their way through this series (at least these first two books and carrying into the third book). The car crash that Meg's mother is involved in; and what will happen with Taylor, Luke's (Meg's brother) daughter and who is going to get custody of her.

Overall this is a highly enjoyable series, with great characters and a wonderful setting. Highly recommend.

Challenges

♥ RRRC April 2018 Monthly Challenge #9. April 28 - International Astronomy Day

♥ RRRC: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Quarterly Challenge:#6. Doc: Read a book with a smart character, a nerd or a geek.

Brie says

Originally posted at Romance Around the Corner

I'm a long-time fan of Ms. Kantra's books. Last year, the first book in the series, Carolina Home, was one of my favorite books, and I was anxiously waiting to read the next one. I'm happy to say that it was just as good as expected.

This is a pretty standard book with a pretty standard set of tropes.

First we have our heroine, Meg. She grew up in a loving home and had dreams too big for the small island. She was in love with her older brother's best friend; a guy who broke her heart the day he took her virginity and left. Eighteen years later, she's incredibly successful, lives in New York and shares her life with a long-

time boyfriend who is clearly all wrong for her because 1. He's never asked her to marry him and 2. He doesn't console her after she loses her job. So she decides to go back home to put her life in order, figure out what to do and in the meantime help take care of her mother who was recently in an accident.

Then we have Sam, the hero. Unlike Meg, his family was a mess. His mother abandoned him when he was a kid, leaving him with a rich father more concerned with women than with taking care of his son. When Meg's family moved back to the island, he found the love and warmth he craved, which is why he panicked when he had drunken sex with Meg. But unlike the usual tormented-by-a-loveless-upbringing, poor-little-rich hero, Sam is quite committed to proving himself, doesn't hold irrational grudges against his father, and is pretty quick to realize that Meg is the one.

The setting is fairly predictable and trite, but as is the case with similar stories, the execution is everything, and the book delivers a romance that may not be particularly refreshing, but it was sweet, entertaining and reminded me of the reason why I love Contemporary Romance.

Meg is an ambitious and career-driven heroine; something we know isn't usually compatible with the genre. Similar heroines tend to be dissatisfied with their work and welcoming of the magical wang that shows them how their life would be better outside the office and inside the kitchen. This book doesn't entirely go there, although it had me worried for a second, and instead uses the rare compromise that still leaves the heroine in charge and in love with her job (but away from evil New York and directly into the idyllic small town, because what else?). I won't lie, though, I would love to see a hero give up or make considerable changes to his career just to be with the heroine. I'm aware that this is another unfair extreme, but it would be quite something. In the meantime, I'll have to settle for books like *Carolina Girl*, in which that option is considered, but only goes as far as becoming a convenient grand gesture.

Sam was an adorable, charming hero. His main attribute was being the one who decided to risk his heart once he realized the extent of his feelings. I also enjoyed reading about a guy who had so many generic traits but managed to make them his own by the force of his personality alone. As with everything else about this book, there was nothing new about him, but it just worked.

This series reminds me of Nora Roberts' older Contemporaries (the Chesapeake Bay books in particular). There's even a little kid that has a secondary role throughout each book (fortunately, she's not one of those cutesy, precocious little kids). If you liked those books, you will feel like Ms. Kantra wrote this series just for you.

There you have it. This is a small-town-ish series (without the annoying townsfolk) that revolves around a tight family that has realistic issues. None of the characters are cartoons defined by a couple of ridiculous traits, and the book is far from one of those mass-produced small-town Contemporaries that completely blend in together. *Carolina Girl* is a memorable book that pretty much proves that quality over quantity is always best, even if it means having to wait one year to find out how it all ends.

Lorelei's says

Carolina Girl

Where to start... I've been eager to read Virginia Kantra's second Dare Island Novel- *Carolina Girl* after reading her first of this series, *Carolina Home*.

Why? Well, if I was delighted with the first story, I can say the author certainly impressed me again with Carolina Girl.

Carolina Girl truly swept me away. This contemporary novel is full of romance, family and small town community support. Sam Grady will charm you with his fun teasing and great character. He had me swooning with his ways, the true dream guy.

I loved the relationship between Sam and Meg, it was fun, romantic and real. Their scenes together gave me that -butterflies in the tummy- feeling . You could tell they had chemistry from the start. Other family drama fit in well with the story, kept me hooked and reading till the end. Not a dull moment while I read. Now I'm eager and will have to patiently wait for the next book to come out!

I highly recommend this one if you enjoy swoon worthy romances and true family bonds. If you like Robyn Carr, Jill Shalvis and Kristan Higgins, you will definitely like Virginia Kantra's A Dare Island Novel series. She's now on my favorite authors list! I give it a 4.5 rating.

I am a free lance reviewer and accepted a review copy of this book in return for my honest review.

Saly says

This is the second book in the series about the daughter Meg, who lives in New York with her boyfriend of six years. Meg puts a lot stock into how her life is planned and will not be like her mother's and then she is fired and when she comes home, she runs into Sam, her high school crush, her first who keeps reminding her at every turn what is missing from her relationship. Meg for me was a tough character to like while I adored Sam because he was just so good to everyone. All in all we see Matt and Allison get engaged, Meg's mom come home after her accident and Meg remembering what matters. I cannot wait for the next book!
