



A Summer in Sonoma

By Robyn Carr

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Cassie has sworn off romance after yet another bad date. Yet deep down, she's still looking for Mr. Forever. A long-haired biker doesn't figure into her plans, so where's the harm in touring the back roads of Sonoma on a Harley with Walt Arneson?

Julie married her high school sweetheart—who can get her pregnant with a mere glance—too young and now wonders how her life became all about leaky faucets and checkbook balances. Maybe love isn't enough to sustain the hottest couple in town.

Marty's firefighter husband has forgotten all about romance, and an old flame begins to look mighty tempting.

Beth, a busy doctor trapped in a body that's betrayed her yet again, is becoming a difficult patient and a secretive friend.

Life can change in an instant...or a summer. And having old friends to lean on can only up the chances of happily ever after.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Carr (the Virgin River series) brings four high school friends together in a slow-moving but charming story set in beautiful Northern California. Cassie is sick of searching for Mr. Right and ending up with Mr. Very Wrong. Julie wishes she didn't worry about money all the time. Marty misses romance to the point that she's considering cheating on her husband. Stoic Beth quietly struggles with health problems. Cassie tries to understand her feelings for a ponytailed biker, Julie deals with an unexpected pregnancy, Marty attempts to save her marriage, and Beth realizes breast cancer is not something she can hide. Though the leading ladies are not terribly well developed, their stories will strike a chord with readers. Male supporting characters add spark and help propel the plot to a predictable yet satisfying happy ending.

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About the Author

Robyn Carr is a RITA® Award-winning, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of more than forty novels, including the critically acclaimed Virgin River series. Robyn and her husband live in Las Vegas, Nevada. You can visit Robyn Carr's website at www.RobynCarr.com.

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Cassie and Ken walked out of the bar together at seven-thirty. In the rapidly descending darkness of a perfect June night, he pulled her into his arms and covered her mouth in a powerful kiss. Wow, she thought. It was a good kiss—consuming and deep. His hands were running up and down her back. Then one slipped around her side, reaching for a breast, and she withdrew. She pushed him away, laughed nervously and said, "Hold on, pardner. Getting a little ahead of yourself, aren't you?"

"Sorry," he said. "I've been looking at you, wondering, you know..."

"Well, wonder no more, big fella—rest assured I am definitely a girl. Now, don't we have plans? Live music in the park?"

"That's right," he said, laughing. Then, again, "Sorry."

As he walked her to his car, she said, "Girls don't get mad at guys for having romantic ideas. But you do have brakes, I assume?"

"Absolutely, Cassie."

"Good. You were moving a little fast for me."

The car was parked at the far end of the lot and she thought, Ahh, he's car proud. He'd rather walk across the lot than risk a dent or scratch from neighboring cars. He opened the door to the passenger side and she slipped in. She immediately pulled on her seat belt while he got in the driver's side.

He started the car, but didn't put it in gear. Instead, he reached over to her side and began to gently caress her upper arm. He leaned toward her across the console, his eyelids becoming heavy, his mouth slightly open. It was like kiss-on-demand, but at least he was moving more slowly, giving her time, waiting for her to respond. She met his lips for a sweet, short kiss. He moved over her mouth with precision, but when she pulled away from his mouth, laughing nervously again, he grabbed her upper arms in his strong grip.

"Cassie," he said in a breath. "What do you say we rethink the music? Maybe skip it?"

"I don't think so. I was looking forward to it," she said, her heart rate speeding up a little. She started to smell an ill wind.

"Come on," he begged. "Think about it. You won't be sorry...."

She did a quick memory check. She'd been out for happy hour with friends from work when she met him. They'd talked for a long time. She was an emergency room nurse, he was a paramedic—they'd never met before but she did a lot of business with the fire department and had come to think of them as the good guys. He had been polite, attentive, interested. He was a nice-looking guy with a sense of humor. She'd taken his cell phone number and agreed to meet him again, this time for a cup of coffee. That's how you play safe dating. He'd been a gentleman, walking her to her car after coffee and saying goodbye with a brief, platonic hug. Then she'd given him *her* cell phone number. So, after a few getting-to-know-you conversations, she'd accepted a date for live music in the park. She still hadn't let him pick her up; they'd agreed to meet at a bar because finding each other in a park full of people could be difficult.

His behavior now took her by surprise. She'd have to back him down quick. She'd been attracted to him, but no way was she ready to take this to the next level.

"I don't have to think about it," she said, her palms pressed firmly against his chest. "I was looking forward to some music. It's a beautiful night. And what you apparently have in mind is not on the agenda in the parking lot of the—"

Her words were cut off as he slipped a big hand around the back of her head and pulled her, roughly, onto his mouth. She pushed at him, making unintelligible sounds beneath his lips, but he was actually *climbing* across the console while silencing her with his mouth. For a guy about six feet tall, this was unimaginable, but he seemed to do it with ease. In seconds, he was straddling her hips, towering over her so fast she hardly knew what was happening.

"Hey!" she said when he released her lips. "Hey, what are you *doing*?"

She was thinking quickly. There were a few cars around his, but he had parked away from the crowd and his windows were darkly tinted. Her next thought was, How is this possible? This is a nice guy! This is a paramedic! My best friend's husband is a paramedic; I know a lot of their friends! They're salt of the earth—angels!

But he was pressing her back against the seat, devouring her mouth, breathing real hard and fast through his nose. He popped her seat belt off and although she pushed and her protests were lost as whimpers beneath his mouth, she was focused on the logistics of his attack. He couldn't possibly plan to rape her in the front bucket seat of an SUV? She was wearing shorts; freeing her from her clothes would not be simple!

Then her seat began to recline—he had his hand on the button. He was slowly laying her down. She was beginning to understand his plan. If he got her flat, he could pull down her shorts. If he raped her and let her

loose, if he didn't leave bruises or marks, he'd claim she wasn't forced. She'd run her share of rape kits in the E.R., heard her share of he-said-she-said stories while a skeptical detective took notes. Well, by God, she was at least going to force him to leave bruises! She began to kick and push and wiggle, throwing her head and body wildly back and forth, side to side.

"Stop it," he said. "Stop it now. Come on. We know what we want!"

"Get *off me*, you son of a bitch!"

"Aw, Cassie," he laughed, as if she'd uttered some kind of endearment. "Baby, come on—I'm totally into you!"

"You're *crazy!* Let me go! Get off me! *Now!*"

"Come on, come on, settle down...."

"*No!*" she screamed. Just scream, she told herself. Bite, kick, scream, yell, hit, gouge, anything. She pushed at him with one hand, searching for the door handle with the other. Then, failing to find it, she pounded on the window, hoping to break it, screeching and turning her head away from his mouth so she could get volume. She tried head butting him, but he held her shoulders down and lifted his head back, and he *laughed*. She was moving around so violently, the car was actually bouncing. He tried to grab her wrist but she socked him in the eye. He grunted in pain and growled, but he didn't hit back. She continued banging on the window and yelling. She knew one thing—he couldn't get her out of this parking lot without moving to his side of the car, over that console, and by God she was going to fling herself out of the car before he could take her anywhere.

Suddenly there was a sharp rapping on her window. "Hey!" someone with a deep male voice yelled. "Hey!"

"Oh, God," she cried, suddenly overcome with relief and hope. "*Help!*" she screamed. "*Hel—!*" And then Ken put his hand over her mouth.

Ken lowered the window an inch. "Hey, go away, pal. We're busy!" And he powered the window back up.

Cassie bit his hand as hard as she could and he jumped so abruptly, he hit his head on the ceiling of the car.

Cassie heard the man with the deep voice try to open the locked door. Then the window's glass suddenly cracked and, like a spiderweb, spread into a million cracks. But it was tempered glass and didn't break, merely crystallized, leaving a dent in the glass where it had been hit. A sharp object she vaguely recognized as a key popped through the compromised glass and started boring a hole into it, releasing diamondlike pebbles of glass that fell into the car. Ken decided to return to the driver's seat. "What the hell are you doing, man?" he screamed at the intruder.

A huge hand attached to a huge arm entered through the hole in the window and reached down to flip the lock. The door opened instantly and Cassie stumbled out. She was gasping as she looked into a face far more frightening than Ken's. This was a giant wearing a tight white T-shirt covered by a black leather vest adorned with chains. On the arm that had freed her was a tattoo of a naked lady. He had a lot of facial hair—long, thick sideburns and a handlebar moustache that framed his mouth. His hair was pulled back into a ponytail. With his hands on her elbows to help her stand upright, he asked, "You hurt?" His voice was very menacing; he frowned blackly. Cassie was five-three and this guy had a foot on her, at least.

"No," she said, gasping. "Yes. I mean, no. He..." She couldn't finish.

He pulled her away from the SUV and turned her around so that he stood between her and the car. "You need the police? Or the hospital?" he asked as he pulled a cell phone out of his pants pocket.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "You were in time." Then she hiccupped and choked; a fat tear ran down her cheek. "Oh, God!"

"Can I call someone for you?" he asked, his voice miraculously softer.

Suddenly the SUV was in gear, and Ken—the polite, salt-of-the-earth paramedic—took off. The passenger door slowly drifted closed as the car banked and turned, leaving some skid marks behind.

"My purse..." she whimpered.

Suddenly the SUV skidded to a stop just before exiting the parking lot. Through the broken passenger door window flew an object, crashing to the ground. Then the car sped away. "Your purse," the big guy said. "Stay here." He walked across the parking lot, squatted to return scattered items from her purse back into it, then brought it back to her. "Here you go," he said, holding it out.

Cassie looked up at the guy who had saved her. A biker dude. He looked scruffy and scary, like he could be a Hells Angel or something. But Ken, so clean-cut, turned out to be the dangerous one.

"God," she said. "I never saw that coming. If you hadn't..."

"You okay? Because I can call the police. I got the plate number."

"I wasn't hurt—just scared to death. I swear, that shouldn't have happened."

"It looked pretty bad there for a minute."

"For a minute, it *was* pretty bad. I think maybe he was going to—" She stopped. She couldn't say it.

"Hey, now. You sure you're okay?" the guy asked again.

Cassie fished around in her purse for her keys, her hands shaking. "Yeah," she said with a sniff. "I'll be fine. I think."

"You want me to follow you home or something? Make sure you don't have any trouble?"

She let a huff of laughter escape through her tears. Imagine having a guy like *this* follow her, know where she lived? Suddenly the world didn't make any sense. "I won't go straight home. I'll go to my girlfriend's. She has a protective German shepherd and a six-foot-two-inch husband."

"You sure you don't want to just check in with the police?" he asked, his brows furrowing. "Talk to them about it?"

"She also has three kids," Cassie said.

The big man laughed, a deep and rumbling sound. "Well, I guess that oughta hold anyone back."

Another laugh puffed out of Cassie, but then she instantly plummeted into tears. Loud tears. Her purse dropped from her hands and she leaned against him, wailing.

"Whoa, kiddo," he said. "I think maybe I should buy you a cup of coffee, get you a little straightened out before you drive...."

"I'm not... I wasn't... I haven't been drinking or anything," she finally choked out.

"I didn't mean to sober you up," he said with a laugh. He bent down and picked up the purse and then, with a big arm draped around her shoulders, he gently, protectively, led her back toward the bar.

Looking up at him, she asked, "What if he comes back?"

"He's not coming back," the man said. "You're okay for now. Come on, let's have a cup of coffee. Calm down a little. Then you go on to your girlfriend's. Huh?"

By the time he got all that out, they were nearly at the door to the bar. She wiped at her cheeks, her eyes. "I really don't know what to do," she said.

"I know," he answered. "Coffee, that's what we do."

In just a few minutes she was sitting in a corner booth, staring into a cup of black coffee, across from one big, mean-looking biker. And he had a cup of coffee, too.

Cassie could hardly lift her head; she was exhausted, frightened, wrung out, relieved. But as she slowly realized what she really was, she looked up in some surprise, right into the amazing blue eyes of her rescuer. "God, I'm so *embarrassed*," she said in a breath.

"You shouldn't be embarrassed," he said. "You didn't attack him. He should be embarrassed, but he's probably not. Bet he's scared, though."

"Of you?"

"Not necessarily. You know, it's not too late to call the police. My little brother's a cop, actually. He's not working tonight, but we could still call him. He'd be good for some advice, at least." Then he laughed. "Of all us boys, he was about the worst one. Figures he'd turn into a cop. And a real hard-case cop, too. Not a lot of gray area with him. Listen, how well do you know that guy?"

"Apparently not well enough," she said, shaking her head. "We met at happy hour, then had a coffee date and talked on the phone quite a bit. He works with people I know. I guess."

"You guess?"

"Well, he said he was a paramedic and my best friend's husband is a paramedic. I know a lot of their friends. I thought we had mutual friends. Jeez. What if he was just lying?"

"License plates don't lie."

"How did you know to help me?"

He smiled. "You're kidding, right? I *heard* you. The car was rocking. Two people in the front seat? I figured if it was consensual, you'd both be in the backseat." He shrugged. "It was worth checking out."

"What did you use to break that window?"

He lifted a hand. He stared at his own knuckles for a second. They were bruised and swelling.

"Holy cow," she said. "Are *you* okay?"

"Yeah. It'll be fine." Then he grinned. "Maybe he'll try to sue me or something, huh? I'd love that. So, I'm Walt. Walt Arneson."

"Cassie," she said. Then she shook her head. "You must think I'm pretty stupid."

"Doesn't sound like it," he answered.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Billy Simpson:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be up-date about what going on or facts even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era which can be always change and progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you is you don't know what type you should start with. This *A Summer in Sonoma* is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Irene Weinstein:

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Herman Deans:

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Barry Whitfield:

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