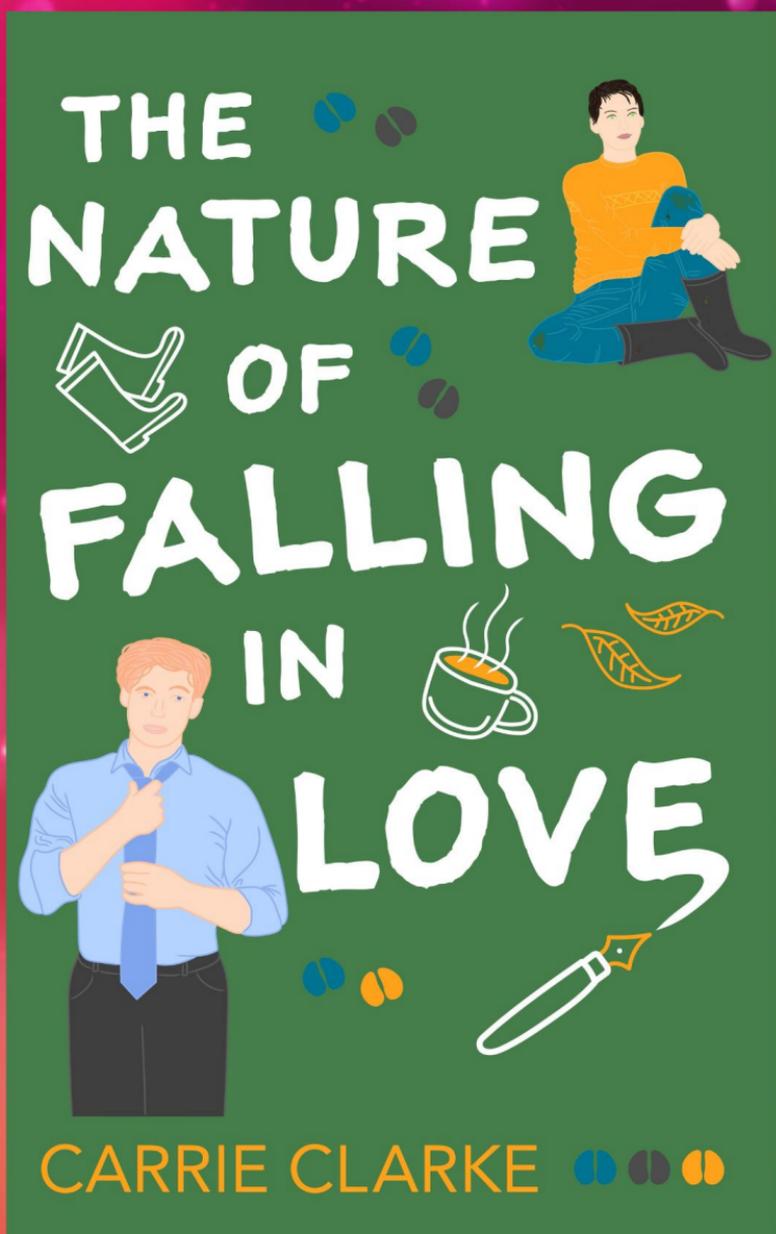


# Bonus Content



Will the Midwife...

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# WILL

“**Y**ou’ve got some explaining to do, Doctor. I leave you alone for twenty minutes to pick up that raspberry and rosewater jam you like, and you sneak off like a teenager for a date with pregnant cows. We talked about this.”

There’s no answer and it’s too dim to see much. I push the door open to let in more light. And the jar of extraordinary jam I’m brandishing, that’s been out of stock for two months, falls to the floor as I rush forward.

“Freyja. Jesus fucking Christ. What’s happening?”

Standing with her feet wide apart, Freyja is doubled over, her hands on her knees. Panting. Her jeans are soaking wet.

I drag a bale of hay over, sit and pull her down onto my lap, supporting her weight. It might be seconds, but it feels like hours before Freyja lets out a shaky laugh.

“I think I might be in labour.”

I already have my phone out.

“Doctor Potter is in Sydney. At an in-service.” Freyja is starting to catch her breath.

“Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck.” My heart is racing and I’m having trouble latching on to a rational thought. Now is not the time. Freyja needs me and I won’t be letting her down. I take a deep breath. Think Will. Think.

“Okay, how far apart are the contractions, do you know?”

“I’m not sure. A few minutes maybe.” Freyja is gulping air like a landed fish.

“And how long has this been going on?” I stand us both up and manoeuvre her onto her knees, resting her arms on the haybale. Huh. Who knew it would be the perfect height. “Is that comfortable?”

She nods. I grab her phone from the back pocket of her jeans—thankfully it escaped the deluge—and flick on the stopwatch, sliding it between her hands.

“Do you think you can hit the button when the contraction starts?”

She nods and I notice her breathing start to catch. She hits the button. Shit. It can’t be more than two minutes since I walked into the barn. That’s close.

I rub her back as she pants through the contraction. At forty-nine seconds she hits stop.

“I don’t think we have time to get to the hospital.” She groans.

It takes three goes from my shaking fingers to call the district nurse. She’s over an hour away assisting with a dying patient. Fuck.

“Looks like we’re on our own, Doctor.”

I’ve helped Freyja deliver many a calf in this barn. But this is different. I can’t even think about the consequences if I fuck this up.

Freyja’s truck is outside and it’s full of all kinds of medical stuff. Sure, it’s for animals, but it’ll have to do.

I hold her through her next contraction and leg it out to the car. I’m loaded up with clean towels, a blanket, and her medical bag when the rattle of a familiar engine cuts through my racing thoughts.

“What’s going on? I felt something.” Diana says as she climbs out of her ancient VW Beetle.

“She’s in labour. Doctor and nurse MIA. I’m the midwife.” I waste no words, but shove extra supplies at her, and tip my head for her to follow me.

All hell is breaking loose. I don't know who set who off, but there's a cow in labour in the corner, moaning at the top of its lungs, and Freyja is now groaning and letting fly the occasional pained scream. I tamp down the panic. I can do this. I have to do this.

Diana and I get a blanket laid out and move Freyja off the dirt floor. I grab a scalpel and cut Freyja's clothes off, tossing them into the corner. Diana puts a sterile pack of clamps and scissors on a fresh towel and rubs Freyja's back through another contraction while I try and call everyone—anyone—in my family. I'm going to need them when this is all over. The only fucker who answers is Ethan, and he doesn't hesitate. He's on his way. I have no earthly idea what he'll do to help. If he even gets here in time. But knowing he'll be here sometime soon helps to calm my mind.

"Right. Well. I'll be outside if you need me." Diana pats Freyja's shoulder and saunters away.

I want to scream *what? you can't just leave me*. But I also want to be the one who does this for Freyja. For our babies. For us. Delivering a baby in a barn isn't idea. But I will do this. And they will be safe and healthy and whole.

"Will," the woman I adore whimpers in such an un-Freyja like voice that I'm jolted out of my quandary.

"I'm here, Freyja. I'm here."

"I want to push. I need to push." Which means I'm going to have to look at what's going on at the business end.

I know she's supposed to be ten centimetres dilated. I paid attention in birthing class. Unfortunately, I don't really know what ten centimetres looks like in this context. But the fact that I can see something trying to come out suggests to me pushing now might be okay.

"Alright, baby." I soothe.

"Baby?" Freyja laughs. I'm glad to see she still has her sense of humour. I never use words like that.

“Stop it. Pay attention. Just push on the next contraction. Go gently at first, let’s see what that does.”

I can tell by Freyja’s breathing that another contraction is starting. The noise coming out of her is inhuman. Much like the noise coming out of the cow at the same time.

“Oh, Freyja. I can see hair. It has hair. Red hair.” I start to cry. The babies Freyja and I made will be here any minute. I just hope I can bring them into the world safely.

Even in her pain, Freyja understands my fears.

“You can do this, Will. There’s no-one else I’d trust to keep us safe.” Her hand flails out and grips mine like a vise as another wail rips out of her.

I can feel her body pushing, straining, working to bring our baby into the world.

Contractions come and go. I chant words of encouragement. Of love. Of strength. Freyja’s face is red, her hair drenched in sweat. But with each contraction that little patch of red hair moves closer, until suddenly, it becomes the top of a head.

“You’re nearly there, my love. One more contraction I think.” I hope. Because she’s going to have to do this all over again once this baby is born.

The muscles in her back tense. She grunts. Deep and long.  
And into my waiting hands slides our baby.

I can hardly see for the tears pouring out of my eyes.

“Oh, Freyja. We have a little boy. And he’s perfect.”

I reach for a towel to keep him warm as Freyja slumps to her side, gasping for breath and reaching out for our son, pulling him against the bare flesh of her chest. I lie down beside them and both of us laugh as our little boy lets out an unholy bellow.

“I’d say that’s a nine on the APGAR.” I whisper, my mouth pressed to Freyja’s forehead.

“You really were paying attention ...” she starts, only to break off on another sob. “Here we go again.”

I wrap our baby tightly in another towel and tuck him safely in a bundle of hay.

Freyja has struggled back onto her hands and knees and is straining and pushing all over again.

This time the patch of red hair grows quickly, and almost before either of us realise what's happening, our daughter is sliding into my hands, along with a small rush of blood and all the other stuff you expect after a baby.

Thank God I had some idea what to expect, because if I hadn't seen it before—okay, only with cows, but still—I might be alarmed at the level of mess involved. In fact, human birthing is much less noxious.

“Two for two. You're a star.” I say, easing Freyja down and putting our daughter into her arms.

And just like that, on the dirt floor of a barn, my little family of two became a family of four.

We're silent for a long time, lying face to face on a messy rug, our babies tucked safely between us, where they belong.

“I feel like we've come full circle.” I whisper, not wanting to disturb the peace of our little cuddle. Even the cow has gone silent.

“How do you mean?” Freyja shifts so a baby can press more closely against her bare skin.

“Well, I think I started to fall in love with you that night we delivered Sweet and Heart. And now we've delivered our own twins here. I was fucking terrified at first. But actually, I think this barn was the perfect place for them to be born.”

“I think so too.”

“That said. Let's not do it again, hmm? Try for a hospital—or at least a house—next time?”

“Oh, yeah. Never again in the barn. This dirt floor was hell on my knees.”

And we laugh as the cow that just gave birth, and her new calf, stick their heads over the hay bale as though to investigate the matching wails from our perfect twins.

“Is now the right time to ask again if you'll marry me?” I'm not proud. Maybe in her weakened state she'll say yes.

“Hmm. Ask me when I’ve had a shower, something to eat and a nap.”

And that’s not a no. What a day. Two beautiful babies, and a maybe yes.

Oh, and by the looks of it, a healthy calf.

# FROM THE AUTHOR

I hope you enjoyed watching Will bring yet another set of twins into the world. If you'd like to find out what happens next, *The Problem with Falling in Love*, the fifth and final book in the *Falling in Love* series, will be out late 2024.

Thank you for reading!

Love, Carrie x