

Bonus Content



Will Gets the Last Word



**THE  
PROBLEM  
WITH  
FALLING IN  
LOVE**

WILL GETS THE LAST WORD - BONUS  
CONTENT

CARRIE CLARKE

Copyright © 2024 by Carrie Clarke. The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, transmitted, copied, stored or distributed or otherwise made available by any person or entity, in any form, without prior written permission from the publisher or author. Without in any way limiting the author's exclusive rights under copyright, any use of this publication to 'train' generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to generate text is expressly prohibited. The author reserves all rights to licence uses of this work.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real places or people, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

This book is written using Australian English. You might find unfamiliar spelling or phrases. If anything in particular perplexes or interests you, please contact me at [hello@carriecclarkeauthor.com.au](mailto:hello@carriecclarkeauthor.com.au). I'd love to hear from you.

# CONTENTS

Sadie	1
Ethan	5
Will	9



## SADIE

“Is the case of bubbles in the boot?” It’s a rhetorical question really. Nobody is more organised than Ethan. That competency porn that drew me to him when we first met is still alive and strong.

“Yes. And the presents. Our bags. Those Christmas decorations you bought for the tree. Anything else?” Ethan wraps his arms around me from behind and kisses my neck causing a familiar shiver and weakening of my knees. Still.

“No. I think that’s it. Although do that again and we won’t be leaving anytime soon. And you’ll have to explain to Stella why we’re late.”

“They’ll understand. We’re newlyweds,” he murmurs against my hair.

“Yeah, no. I think the statute of limitations on that ran out on our first anniversary. Definitely by the second.”

He sighs.

“We could claim we’re trying to get our bodies onto Egypt time.” More a question than a statement.

I turn in his arms and kiss his beautiful lips.

“Nice try. But we have news to announce. And I’m not going to be responsible for disappointing your mother again this year. We promised.”

“Christmas isn’t for two more sleeps,” he grumps. “And once we get to Egypt, you know what it’ll be like. No privacy anywhere. This could be our last opportunity for months.”

I laugh. It's true finding private time in Egypt—and in Bangalore for that matter—isn't easy, but we seem to manage somehow.

"How about I promise we can go on a walk to that little paddock we found tucked in behind the creek?"

Ethan shudders.

"The one with the bull?"

"Camels you can deal with, but not bulls." I roll my eyes. Ethan didn't even notice the bull last time until I pointed him out. Although, to be fair he was a little distracted.

"Camels don't have horns." But I can see I've given him ideas. "Alright, let's get on the road. The sooner we get there the sooner I can ask Paul to move that bull to another paddock." And with that, Ethan hustles me out the door of the little house he first brought me to six years ago, and into the car.



"Sadie!" Multiple screams fill the air and a dozen waterlogged children leap out of the pool and come barrelling across the lawn towards me, adults trailing in their wake.

As always, Isla is first to latch on, wrapping her arms around my waist and hugging me. I can't believe how much she's grown since I last saw her. Ethan laughs and steps aside, making room for the kids. I do a quick headcount.

"Who's missing?" There should be thirteen. That's right. When everyone gets together, the Carter family have thirteen small people. Which is why Harry and Stella built a guesthouse that includes a massive bunkroom with five sets of double bunks. When the whole family's here, it's like St Trinian's on crack.

"Magnus," they chorus, naming the missing child. Nick and Lulu's second oldest.

"He broke his arm."

"He was climbing the swing tree."

"Mum told him not to."

“Freyja said she’d set it for him.”

“But Daddy said a doctor better do it.”

“He didn’t even cry.”

“Mummy and Daddy took him to the hostile.”

“Hospital, Rory. Not hostile.”

If you couldn’t tell by the abundance of red hair, you would know these children as Carters by the way they all talk at once, tripping over each other and taking no offence at all.

“Oh, dear,” is all I manage to get out before we hear the crunch of tires on the driveway.

A few moments later Nick and Lulu appear on the back deck with a grinning Magnus, his arm in a bright blue cast and sling.

Suddenly I’m no longer the centre of attention as the children and adults swarm Magnus.

What I am is very wet. Ethan gives me long look, lingering on the wet T-shirt that’s clinging to my boobs.

“This is what you get for being the favourite auntie.”

“You don’t look like you’re complaining,” I shoot back. And before he can sidestep, I launch myself at him, wrapping my legs around his waist and kissing him, imprinting the pool water from me, onto his shorts and T-shirt.

“Jesus, you two. Keep it PG. There are kids around,” Will complains, as if he and Freyja aren’t caught in PDAs on the regular.

Ethan ignores him and, opening the pool gate one handed, staggers to the edge. For a split second I think he’s going to hurl me in, but with a roar of ‘bombs away’ he leaps into the deep end, spraying everyone within a ten-metre radius with water.

As I surface, laughing and choking, I catch sight of Stella’s face.

When I first met Ethan, her expression whenever she looked at him was a heartbreaking combination of worry and sadness and longing. Today, like Ethan, she’s beaming ear to ear. And I’m proud to think I had a hand in creating that joy for both of them.



## ETHAN

There's nothing for it now that we're so wet but to go upstairs and get changed. And by changed, I mean naked. In the shower.

"Ethan. We can't." Sadie tries to wriggle out of my grip. But she doesn't try too hard.

"We can. We should. We will. You can't expect me to ignore these." I bend and suck one of her taut nipples into my mouth. "We'll be quick."

"Not too quick." Her hand slides down my abs, reaching for my ready and waiting erection. "But very, very quiet." She giggles as I moan. Having spent a good part of our life together living on a small boat with a bunch of uni students, we're the masters of quiet.

And we're just quick enough, because no sooner are we pulling on dry clothes than there's a little tapping at the bedroom door.

"Uncle Ethan, Daddy said you'd explain to me how they make mummies. Will you be dry soon?" Harriet, Greer and Josh's eldest daughter, shares my fascination with Egypt.

"As dry as a mummy in just a minute, sweetheart," I answer.

"I won't be," Sadie whispers in my ear. But kids have the hearing of bats.

"How can you still be wet, Auntie Sadie? You've been up here for *ages*."

We both snort a laugh.

“Mummy will explain it to you when you’re older,” Sadie calls with an evil grin, knowing Greer will have to field that one before the sun has set.

I throw open the door.

“Okay, we might just have enough time for this before dinner.” And I hoist Harriet over my shoulder and head down the stairs towards the living room, leaving Sadie to bring up the rear.



Dinner is the usual chaos. When you get twelve adults and thirteen children together, that’s inevitable. Especially when they’re Carters. Christmas Day will be worse because adding the Hooper family, Sadie’s grandparents and Josh’s brother rounds it out to an even ... shit. I’ve lost track. But it’s more than twenty adults, I know that much. Lucky Mum and Dad have so much room.

As always, Will grumbles about the smell of the barbequed meat upsetting the ‘girls’, even though it’s chicken. Platters and bowls are being passed around. Kids are grabbing for bread rolls. Wine and juice is being poured.

I wait till everyone at the super-sized outdoor table has full plates and glasses, to make my announcement.

Standing up, I pull a Harry and tap on my glass with my fork. The table falls almost silent, except for Clementine’s little voice saying, “I do mine own self.” And yanking her fork away from Greer, almost blinding her older sister with it in the process.

“I have an announcement to make.”

Sadie grins up at me. My mother gasps and puts her hands over her mouth. I know what she’s thinking. Maybe hoping, although she’d never say so. And this is not that. But it’s what both Sadie and I have been working towards. And Mum has never been anything but supportive of the choices we make in our life together, regardless of her own, frankly inexplicable, longing for more grandchildren. I love all our nieces and nephews with the power of Ra—or Aten depending on your

choice of ancient Egyptian religion—but right now, lucky thirteen is surely enough.

“You’re looking at the new Senior Professor of Egyptian Studies, Dr Sadie Montgomery-Carter.” I lift my glass towards my beautiful, blushing wife.

The table erupts. Even the kids cheer, although none of them have any idea why.

Not to be outdone, Sadie stands, holding up a hand and calling for quiet. “And the new Head of Department of Ancient History.” It’s my turn to blush, for maybe the second time in my adult life, before we’re both tackled almost off our feet.

The case of champagne we brought with us was loaded into the outdoor fridge when we arrived, so in no time we’re all toasting with icy cold champagne.

“So what does this mean for your digs, Ethan?” Dad asks, and I give him a brief rundown.

This is the only downside of my new job. While I’ll still be able to go on digs, I won’t be able to run my own anymore. I just won’t have time. On the positive side, I’ll get to visit digs in all sorts of places. And I’m looking forward to changing things up. Although Sadie and I will miss our team.

And I know they’ll be in good hands. Bart Simpson, who came do a couple of semesters at the uni way back when never quite got around to leaving. Not only is he is now lecturing for us, but he’s agreed to take over the Amarna concession. I couldn’t have handed it over to a more worthy replacement.

Not running our own dig will also mean we’ll more than likely be able to arrange our schedule so that we’re home for Christmas most years. And that will make my mother happy.

The six years since I came home from Cambridge have been the perfect combination of lecturing, digs and family, but it’s time to slow it down a little. Spend less time away. More time watching our nieces and nephews grow up. I don’t know if Sadie and I will ever choose to be parents ourselves. It’s a conversation we revisit every six months or so. We never say never.

What I will never get enough of is Sadie. I know in my heart I would never have rebuilt my relationship with my family so strongly if it wasn't for her.

And whatever we choose to do in the future—with or without children—the fresh start she helped me make is full of more love than I would have believed possible.

# WILL

The night sky above my favourite seat in the wildflower meadow is clear and peppered with stars, reminding me of the nights Freyja and I would lie on the grass behind Mum and Dad's house when I first came to Bangalay.

The ferals are all finally in bed, although judging from the whispers and giggles coming from the guest house, they're not yet asleep. My children could have gone home to their own beds just down the road, but where would the fun be in that? They're curled up sharing beds and laughs and secrets with their cousins.

Which means their mum and I will get a sleep in tomorrow. And some actual privacy. Early Christmas present for both of us.

I stretch my legs out and take a sip of the whisky Nick brought from his distillery for us to try. He says it needs a few more years to be optimum, but it tastes pretty good to me already.

I listen to the footsteps on the stone path. Two sets of them. If I don't miss my guess, it's Ben and Greer.

"I came out here for a bit of peace," I grumble.

"Don't let us stop you," Ben says, sitting on the bench opposite me. Originally there was one bench, but we all love this spot so much we've had to put in another two. And we've extended the deck to include a fire pit, although it's way too hot for that tonight.

"How long do you think it will ..." I start before I hear Ethan and Nick making their way down the path.

My heart swells. My brothers. My sister. And my might-as-well-be-a-brother. All here together at Christmas for the first time in years. And on the deck I built when I wondered if my family could ever be put back together.

Nick lifts a half-full bottle of whisky and tops off everyone's glasses.

"Who'd have thought, huh?" I say, looking around at the faces I love so much.

"Yeah. All of us happy. Settled. Doing what we love." Greer answers.

"Who we love," Ben adds, which gets a laugh out of all of us.

"Without wishing to get emotional ..."

"Oh, here we go."

"Are there going to be tears?"

"Wait, I forgot my violin."

I clear my throat and pull one of Dad's master of the universe faces at them.

"As I was about to say before I was so rudely interrupted. Without wishing to get emotional, I want you to know how happy it makes me that we're all together this year. And knowing that you're all safe and happy and loved is the best feeling in the world."

"The best? Nothing better?"

"Sounds like maybe you're doing it wrong."

"Someone needs to have a word with poor Freyja."

"Maybe he needs an instruction book?"

"Haha. Yuck it up. I'm trying to tell you that I love you. We've been through some shit. And no doubt we'll go through more. But I couldn't have asked for more than for us to have each other. You're more than my brothers and sister. You're my best friends. And that makes me the luckiest guy I know."

I look around at their faces, illuminated by the carpet of stars and the half-moon, and every one of them has a tear or two tracking down their cheek. Even Nick.

I lift my glass.

"To our family. Long may we—"

A bloodcurdling scream rolls across the meadow from the open guesthouse windows.

“Muuuumy. Andy puked all over me.”

And in true Carter family tradition, those sentimental tears turn into tears of laughter. Because never let it be said that there's a dull moment in this family.