

'Virgin River' is no place for a city girl in a new BMW

2007 novel by Robyn Carr is now a series on Netflix

By Cheryl Hoefler
GO! Magazine

While dropping off books at a local Little Free Library, this title jumped out at me. "Hmm ... 'Virgin River' ... isn't that a book or a TV show?"

Turns out it's both. This is the original novel, by Robyn Carr, written in 2007. Carr has added subsequent stories to the "Virgin River" collection, and now there's a TV series on Netflix.

Melanie Monroe is a born and bred city girl who loves her job as a hospital midwife/nurse practitioner in Los Angeles. However, she is also fed up with the downsides of city life: a noisy, frenetic existence where crime and other dangers seem to lurk around every corner. The recent, tragic death of her husband of only four years tips Mel to make an escape.

So, in response to an ad for a midwife in a small Northern California town, Virgin River, she packs up the remnants of her life (including her expensive highlighted hair, coat and boots) and heads off in her new shiny BMW for

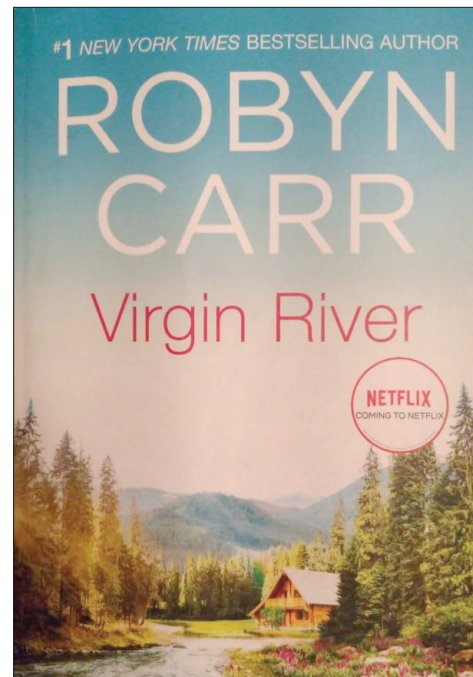
a daring, brave new life hundreds of miles north.

Unfortunately, accommodations awaiting her in Virgin River aren't exactly "as advertised." And the doctor she's supposed to assist is a cranky old guy, who's disagreeable about her presence. Not only that, Virgin River is more than just small; it's downright remote and backwoods. Plenty of pot farms in the woods, but not a Starbucks or hair salon for miles and miles. And it's pouring rain. First impressions — they mean so much.

Fortunately, she has a "Plan B." She decides to make a hasty retreat come morning, switch gears (and direction) toward a new life with her sister Joey and her family in Colorado Springs — which has a compromising population somewhere in between LA's and Virgin River's.

Unfortunately (or is it fortunately?), just as she's starting to peel out of town, kicking up Virgin River dust in her rearview mirror, a baby is abandoned on the doctor's porch. Well, no decent midwife could possibly leave town now.

So Mel stays for a day or two, which turns into a week, then a couple of weeks. One thing or another keeps happening, luring her to linger. The peace and quiet, blue skies, tall trees



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and deer in her yard are an attractive change from LA life. And although it's a place where "everybody knows your name" (and more), she likes the people

and has made some friends. One of those is young, handsome and available Jack Sheridan, owner of the town diner. And he's got baggage, too.

But this isn't a love story. "Virgin River," the book, is about finding the courage to accept the tough circumstances of life, following your gut and moving forward. Virgin River, the town, holds many new experiences and opportunities for Mel, if she can just allow herself the time and space to heal and grow after her husband's death.

Several colorful Virgin River residents float in and out of the story. One of them, Cheryl, is the town drunk who has a not-so-secret crush on Jack. I was amused that she has my name, but really, she's a sad and lonely character. I waited for some kind of resolution about her, good or bad, by the end of the book, but there was none.

I can count on one hand the number of books I've read in a day. This was one of them. As someone who also parted ways with Southern California some years ago for a small, rural town life, I could relate to many of Mel's experiences. I'm looking forward to more of Carr's "Virgin River" tales, either in print or on the Netflix series. And maybe I'll find out what happened to Cheryl.

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