

Catalogue of Carrick Publishing books and e-books:
Descriptions and Excerpts
Visit us at <http://www.carrickpublishing.com/>

Contents:

[Gold And Fishes ~ Donna Carrick](#)

[The First Excellence ~ Donna Carrick](#)

[The Noon God ~ Donna Carrick](#)

[Sept-Iles and other places ~ Donna Carrick](#)

[Knowing Penelope ~ Donna Carrick](#)

[“Four Scoops” Is Over The Top ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[“Three Scoops” Is A Blast! ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[“Two Scoops” Is Just Right ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Nostra and Damus ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[The Priestess and Her Strobe Light Burden ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Tilted Love ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Spotty Ruin ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Family Glue ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of People Dear ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Sunny Lift ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Frothy Play ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[Ten Tales of Darker Core ~ Alex Carrick](#)

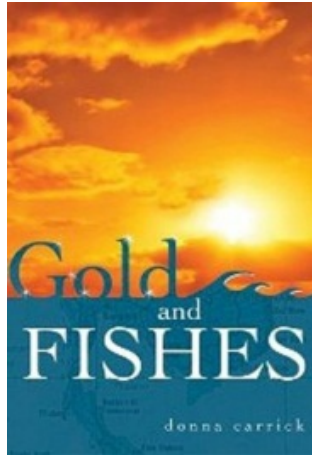
[Ten Tales of Quirky Bent ~ Alex Carrick](#)

[About Donna Carrick](#)

[Connect with Donna](#)

[About Alex Carrick](#)

[Connect with Alex](#)



[Gold And Fishes](#)

Donna Carrick

Description

On December 26, 2004 the earth erupted under the waters of the Indian Ocean.

For Canadian aid worker Ayla Harris, her first overseas mission to post-tsunami Indonesia presents the perfect opportunity for escape. A failed romance with a married man and a strained relationship with her twin sister have left her suffering a general sense of ‘detachment’.

But a late night call on the eve of her departure reminds Ayla the bonds of love can be tenacious. It turns out her wheeler-dealer brother-in-law, Robert Trasque, has gone missing in Thailand.

However, it is the injured orphan Mahdi who restores Ayla’s soul with a single word: mother. In his child’s eyes she discovers the extent of her connection to the world.

From the devastated tourist beaches of Southeast Asia to the graveyard that was Banda Aceh, Ayla sets out on a personal mission – to find her sister’s gold-hungry husband and return him to his family.

In the midst of universal tragedy, what is the value of a single life? Can Ayla expose a killer and avoid becoming the next victim as she and her team struggle to bring hope to a region that is drowning in despair?

Excerpt

January 28, 2005

It was time for me to go. I had already said *selamat tinggal* – goodbye – to anyone who would remember I was there. My bag flopped forward on the tarmac like a worker at the end of a long shift.

Captain William McNairn of the US Marines ran toward me. He waved and pointed to where his helicopter sat beside a skid of empty crates. I would pay for this last flight to Phuket International Airport as I had the others, in the currency of Banda Aceh those days, not the usual

Rupiahs, nor even US dollars, but instead the currency of labour. Before the flight I would load empty crates onto the helicopter. In Phuket I would help to unload them, and then we would load whatever Billy could grab for Banda Aceh – food, medicine or more likely body bags.

I tossed my pack into the chopper and climbed up after it. Billy grunted his hello and threw the first crate into my waiting hands.

I didn't have a photo of Billy. I studied his face, determined to remember every line and every trick of light that made him. He was not the man I remembered from that first day. I suspected I wasn't the woman he remembered either.

At least I hoped I wasn't. No one should witness such tragedy and remain unchanged.

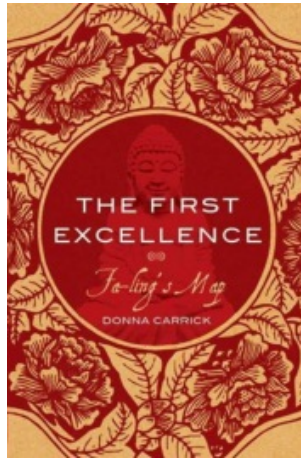
“All set, Ayla?” Billy said. I nodded. His next sentence was lost under the roar of the propellers. I was sorry not to hear him. He had become a man of so few words.

We kept a companionable silence over Aceh Province. Once we hit the open water, though, the quiet became ominous. Billy stared at the dark waves.

Looking out over the Strait of Malacca for what was probably the last time, I was aware of a sense of loss.

Did I dare to hope my efforts in Banda Aceh would make a difference? Already there were reports of man-made deaths even as we struggled in those camps to foster the smallest spark of life.

And what would happen when Captain Billy McNairn and his fellow Marines left the region? Would Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono honour his promises to rebuild Sumatra Island? Or was the dark cloud hanging over Aceh Province bringing with it more unspeakable acts?



The First Excellence

Fa-ling's Map

Donna Carrick



Winner of the 2011 Indie Book Event Award
for excellence in fiction.

Description

What happens when East bleeds into West – when a flower of the Orient takes root in Canadian soil?

Fa-ling is faced with the dilemma of all modern young adults: she must choose a career and settle on a life path that will become her own “first excellence”.

Join Fa-ling on an incredible journey into the heart of mainland China as she sets out to discover the land of her birth. In order to determine her future, Fa-ling must first unlock the mysteries of her past. To this end, she travels with a Canadian adoption group to the exotic southern province of Guang-Xi Zhuang.

Searching for her lost heritage, Fa-ling encounters murder, kidnapping, political intrigue and organ theft. Together with Detective Wang Yong-and his brilliant but uncouth partner Cheng Minsheng, **Fa-ling must uncover a high-stakes kidnapping plot – before another child goes missing!**

Excerpt

Spring, 1989....

Min-xi gripped the edge of the table and forced herself to stand. Another jolt blasted her spine, causing her to double over. From the corner of her eye she saw the little one crouching behind a

chair. Why didn't Jong send her outside to play? No one seemed to notice the child, no one except for Min-xi.

Good Mother came into the room carrying a stack of worn out towels. Jong followed with a full basin. He was almost a foot taller than his mother, but due to a perpetual slouch he possessed only half of the old woman's presence.

"She has grown low from the beginning," Good Mother said. Her voice, never soothing at the best of times, ripped through the humid afternoon with the intensity of a chicken being plucked. Min-xi knew better than to argue with her.

It was not unusual for Good Mother to refer to her daughter-in-law in the third person, as if her son's wife were a family dog that had fallen out of favour. She seldom spoke to Min-xi directly, except to offer instructions concerning domestic matters.

"It will be another girl." Her words slapped the air.

Jong placed the basin on the table and put an arm around Min-xi's waist. He tried to lead her to the bed, but she pushed him away. She would not look at him — had avoided contact for over a month, ever since the decision had been announced one evening at the dinner table.

Jong's father was not present for the birth. He would no doubt make himself scarce until the situation was resolved to his satisfaction. Good Mother said her husband was working in the field, but more likely he was busy tending to a case of watery Beijing beer, his shanty floor littered with bottles.

The old man seldom spoke, yet he managed to rule his family in unbending silence. Somehow Good Mother always understood his wishes. She enforced them without mercy.

"Jong, take this towel," she said. "Clean up that mess." She pointed to the floor where Min-xi stood, water trickling down her leg.

Min-xi reached into a box near the window. She removed a quilt that had been placed there for the purpose. Another wave of pain caught her off guard, and she almost dropped the blanket. Good Mother took it from her and spread it over the bare mattress, taking care to double its thickness near the centre.

Min-xi climbed onto the bed.

It was an easy labour. The child — another girl as expected — was small. It did not require much effort to push her out.

Jong wrapped the infant in a clean towel and placed it in a basket on top of the dresser.

"There will be no name," Good Mother said. "We have the moon tonight, so we will have to wait until tomorrow after dark. If anyone comes this evening, we will say we are all ill and cannot leave the house."

Yes, thought Min-xi, we have the moon. That was as she had planned. When she woke that morning, she excused herself from her chores by telling Good Mother the baby was too close and she could not walk. In truth, she felt as fit as could be expected in her condition. The birth was yet days away, if the signs of her body could be trusted.

Min-xi poured herself a bath. Remembering the advice of old Song, her mother's aunt, she topped it with repeated kettles full of boiling water till it was steaming hot. Then she sat in it for over an hour, drinking castor oil to trigger the contractions.

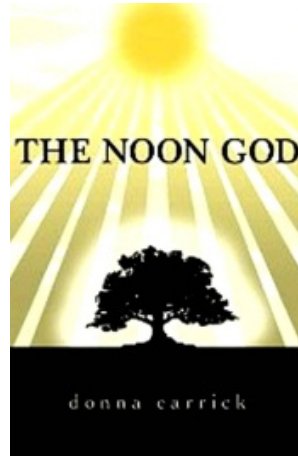
She knew Good Mother would not take action on the night of the full moon, when friends and neighbours might be walking outdoors at any hour and the risk of discovery was too high. By inducing her labour to take advantage of the lunar swell, Min-xi had grasped the only feather of hope that floated within her reach. She had stolen one precious night.

She caught the little one's eye and held it, willing the girl to understand what they must do. It was pointless. A four-year-old could not be expected to carry the desperation of a grown woman. Min-xi would have to take her chances when the time came.

Meanwhile, she needed her rest. Without so much as a look at the newborn, she closed her eyes and turned away from her family. Sleep came quickly despite the turmoil in her soul.

After less than an hour, Min-xi heard the infant stir. She pretended to sleep on. Jong gave the baby a bottle to quiet it. Good Mother made a clucking sound, no doubt scornful of the waste. The old woman put away her sewing and blustered out of the room. There were other tasks to attend to.

Alone at last with Jong and their children, Min-xi continued to feign sleep. She knew there was nothing to be gained from further discussion. Every appeal had already been denied. The gentle, generous man she had married was changing, his goodness eroding with the constant friction of his mother's voice.



[The Noon God](#)

Donna Carrick

Description

Living in the shadow of 'greatness' can be a difficult thing...

Just ask Desdemona Fortune. When her father, the magnificent J. Caesar Fortune, is found murdered inside the offices of the Faculty of Art, there is no shortage of people who carried a grudge against him.

From the lover who could not capture his affection to the colleagues whose efforts were repeatedly ignored, many resented the immensity of his literary success.

For although the 'Man of Words' is lying dead on a slab, his legacy will live on. But as Desdemona knows, the legacy of greatness can bear a heavy price.

In a household pummeled by the dual forces of addiction and narcissism, Desdemona must face the fact the father she loved has hurt those closest to him.

Now, as the head of a once illustrious family, she must do whatever is necessary to save her only surviving sister from the far-reaching influence of an immortal.

Excerpt

My mother once told me judgement was best left in the hands of God. Forgiveness was the virtue she most cherished. The older I get the more I understand the wisdom of her words.

Some days, though, her lesson gets lost under the trials of life. It was shaping up to be one of those days. A blue Corvette zipped into the last parking space. I fought back my anger and found a spot more than half a block away from the building.

It was noon when I killed the engine. The moment I stepped out of the car the August sun assaulted me. My hair felt clammy at the back of my neck. I rummaged in my bag, moving aside the library book and the black leather fanny pack I'd found one evening on the school ground.

So much for good intentions. I never did get around to dropping the pack off at the 'lost and found' office. I reached past it for an elastic band and twisted my hair into a ponytail. Then I tucked my bag under the passenger seat and locked the car.

The cool darkness of the Toronto City Morgue was almost a relief after the sweltering heat. The woman at the front desk told me to have a seat. I sat down and closed my eyes. I hadn't slept much during the past week, ever since I'd reported my father missing.

I didn't hear the Medical Examiner slip into the waiting room. My eyes flew open to find him standing near me. His slight build was a surprise. His voice on the phone had been deep and large.

"Are you Desdemona Fortune?" he asked.

Mona." We shook hands. His was small and twisted.

"I'm Suruj Nil."

I wanted to shut my eyes and rest under the shade of his voice. He withdrew his hand and turned, leading me down a long corridor. I knew what waited at the end of that hallway. It was Death.

It was my father, cold and lifeless on a gurney. It wasn't surprise that gripped my bowels as I studied his features on the television monitor. It was something else – something less tangible.

I had steeled myself for that moment. Just the same I wasn't ready for the wave of reality that rose in my throat. I turned away, afraid I would vomit. Dr. Nil waited patiently.

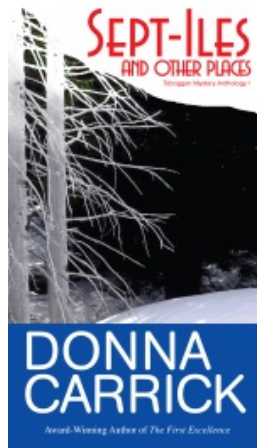
Finally he said, "Is this J. Caesar Fortune?"

"Yes," I answered. "This is my father."

The image on the screen offered no hint of the man I had known. The essence of his greatness was gone. His jaw fell away from his mouth in loose folds. A bullet hole sat proudly in the centre of his forehead, rising above his useless eyes as magnificent and as unforgiving as the midday sun.

My father met death the way he had met life – headfirst. He would not look away from that final judgement. Thankfully Dr. Nil had cleaned the wound so I wasn't forced to study the blood and the bits of grey matter that had been part of him. Dr. Nil turned off the screen and my father's face disappeared. I thought, "So this is it. This is the great J. Caesar Fortune stripped of eloquence and dignity."

I filled out the paperwork and authorised the autopsy. His personal effects – clothing, wallet and keys – were all still in evidence. I carried nothing out of that room except my memories.



[Sept-Iles and other places](#)

Donna Carrick

Description

A selection of 5 haunting stories by Donna Carrick -- Volume 1 of the Toboggan Mysteries series. Each compelling tale features a Northern locale, with characters and settings that will seem familiar to many readers.

North On The Yellowhead: A tale of love and loss in small-town Saskatchewan. When a thirty-something rock star learns of the murder of her childhood sweetheart, she returns home for a final goodbye. Friendship, heartbreak and the road not taken – in life nothing lasts, not even forever.

Dancing with Carole: Seventeen-year-old Ruth is fond of the young couple next door. When they decide to attend the annual dance, she's happy to babysit their children. Their northern village harbors a secret of murder and deviancy – one that will change Ruth's life forever.

Invasion: Where do we draw the line in our closest relationships? When even our private thoughts come under attack, can we still call it love?

The Night She Died: When Jane and her sister visit their cousin Grace, she enlists their help shelling out Halloween candy. But who is the teenaged girl with the strange silver eyes? And why is Grace suddenly terrified beyond words?

Spring's Last Skate: It's a perfect day in Northern Quebec. Doris and Martha have been skating with their friends. Lunch is waiting in their mother's kitchen. Their innocence, though, is short-lived, as the afternoon holds a horror they cannot yet imagine.

Excerpt

Spring's Last Skate

Northern Quebec in March, where birch trees stand snowy white against a sky that is bluer than sapphire, more pure in its color than Martha's eyes. Clean snow crunched under my boots, its surface just beginning to surrender to the sun's caress.

Off to our left, a ditch transformed itself into a tinkling stream, fed by rivulets from the melting banks. Spring thaw – nature’s concession – one more chance at life in region that spends too much energy on dying.

Martha reached for my hand. My red mitten was torn at the thumb, but I didn’t mind. The fabric was soaked anyway from playing in the snow. It smelled of wet wool, the deep, organic musk of animal.

My sister's touch was warm, as always, even through the fabric.

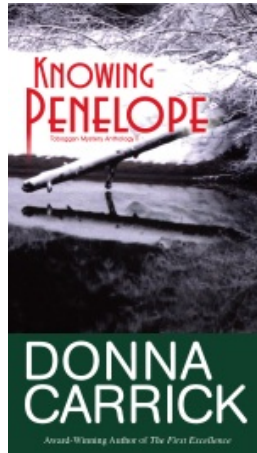
I let her lead me home, despite the brilliant sunshine that called on us to keep playing, despite the cheerful voices of the children at the rink across the street. Days like that don’t come along often. Their rarity burrows into the grey matter that secures our memories, staking out permanent pockets filled with mental photographs we can recall at any time, regardless of the slippery passing of the years.

Images to hold forever... a black rock jutting from the snow... a jack pine bent against frozen clouds... a worn mitten, offering a gay dash of red in the sunlight... the stuff of recollection.

“Hurry up, Doris,” Martha said, pulling at my arm.

I knew the drill. At eight and six years old respectively, Martha and I enjoyed more freedom than many children. Our village in the far north still believed ‘crime’ was something you watched on television, so long as the cable didn’t go out. We were free to run without supervision, skating, crafting snowmen and building forts in the little woods from bits of rotting lumber dumped by lazy contractors at the edge of the larger forest.

There was one caveat to our boundless freedom: we must not be late for meals. *Le déjeuner*, lunch, would be ready at noon sharp. The undeniable pleasure of dallying in the morning air was not worth our mother’s annoyance.



[Knowing Penelope](#)

Donna Carrick

Description

5 tales of deadly intent: Volume II of the Toboggan Mystery Series. These disturbing stories will touch the reader's sense of reality and reveal the dark forces that drive ignoble deeds.

A Happy Customer: Smart, sexy and ready to rumble, petite PI Penelope Canon makes her fictional debut in in this 'confidence' case. Can Penelope follow the money to swindler Jeff Winger and recover her client's life savings? If there's one thing Penelope really likes, it's a happy customer.

Axe Husband: People often asked Kimberly why she'd left Ray. He was a good husband and father who never raised his voice. But when a camping trip in Northern Ontario sparks unexpected tension, her lack of options becomes frighteningly clear.

Low Roller: What do a brash young realist and an elderly artist have in common? When wealthy widow Mattie Oaks hires Penelope Canon to find her drug addicted stepson, the pint-sized PI cannot refuse. As she learns, though, the line between 'helping' and 'enabling' is a thin one.

Prepared: Do you believe in angels? When Helen dreams she is visited by a messenger from God, she hopes her suffering may soon be over. But is Helen really listening to what the angel is trying to say? There are some things, after all, for which we cannot be prepared.

Appearances: Val and Carmen don't know what to make of Janie. Fresh from her husband's funeral, the renowned author seems untouched by grief. Even her step-children find the young widow to be, well, not really cold, but odd. In life, though, as in fiction, things are not always as they seem, and judgement can be a false mistress indeed.

Excerpt

Low Roller

It isn't just that the holidays bring out the worst in people.

Sure, some of us blame the stress and bustle of the season for causing family arguments, a trail of mini crises we leave in our wake as we shop, cook and clean.

The painful struggle to maintain permanent smiles throughout a marathon of entertaining.

It isn't easy being gracious for weeks at a stretch.

But we really shouldn't blame it on the holidays. Some people are just miserable all year round.

The Christmas season, with its artificial twinkle of good cheer, serves to highlight the fact some souls are bleak at the best of times.

Staying cheerful is easier for people like me.

I've got no family to speak of, except for Aunt Rachel, and she never puts up much fuss over Christmas. You see, she never married, so her festive table, elaborately decorated as it is, seats only the two of us.

She detests turkey, preferring a nice steak or a bit of ham.

We usually eat in silence, but it's a comfortable silence. I never doubt her love.

It's her sense of tradition that could use a shot in the arm.

**

"Would you like more tea, dear?"

"No thank you, Mattie," I said. I'd be awake half the night as it was, hopped up on caffeine and peeing a blue streak.

"What did you say your name is?" Mattie's daughter, Delilah – forty if she's a day – pointed her pen my way.

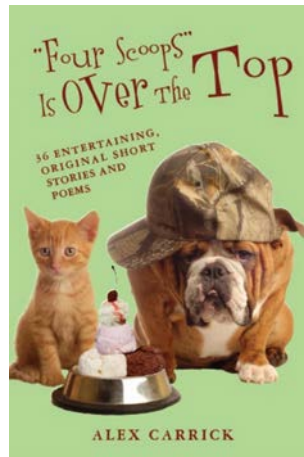
"Penelope Canon," I replied, hiding my annoyance for Mattie's sake. Delilah would have been a good looking woman, except for the permanently pinched look where a smile would have been welcome.

"And how do you know my mother?" she said, scribbling down my name.

I couldn't blame her for being suspicious. From where she sat it would appear odd, me on the young side of thirty-something and claiming a close friendship to Mattie Oaks, a sixty-five year old widow of comfortable means and tremendous elegance.

I was tempted to say 'We met in yoga class', but I chewed on my short-bread cookie instead.

You see, I knew the truth about Delilah.



“Four Scoops” Is Over The Top

Alex Carrick

Description

36 entertaining, original short stories and poems that combine the best elements of "Two Scoops" Is Just Right and "Three Scoops" Is A Blast!

Alex Carrick has twice received Honorable Mention recognition (2010 and 2011) in the Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition for literary excellence.

He likes to explore in an amusing and often touching way the dilemmas we all face in this modern, fast-paced life. He'll play with structure and time to present his unique vision.

Mr. Carrick has been a professional economist covering the construction industry for the past 39 years. He writes extensively on economic matters for several newsletters, newspapers and the Internet, dealing with both Canada and the United States.

Excerpt

Platter and Glance

Branscomb Hall was where the brainiacs lived. There might be psychedelic drugs, free sex and rock and roll elsewhere on campus, but the boys of “Branny” were renowned for keeping their noses to the grindstone.

South of the border, Americans were agonizing over the Vietnam War. In Canada, these were the halcyon days before OPEC would shake up world oil markets.

Blaine Bostock, Elrod Flight and Ravenna Sharpley were all students attending Toronto’s premier university.

All three were exceptional students, with representation in the core subjects of geography, mathematics and English respectively.

The academic year-end was coming like a hurricane and graduation was only a month away for Blaine and Elrod. Ravenna still had another year to go.

Blaine knew what he was about to do was probably wrong in many ways, but he seemed powerless to stop.

He felt the need to secure his reputation among his colleagues beyond the mere scholastic.

Once he graduated, he'd be moving to a position with an established insurance firm in his hometown 200 kilometers away. Time was short.

He knew he could brag about his prowess at any time. He'd already dropped hints among his fellow students. And the girl often on his arm implied a success that many others were clearly not having.

But he also knew it would be more effective for his reputation if someone else gossiped about his conquests on his behalf.

It wouldn't hurt if they spoke with a note of admiration in their voice.

Elrod was the perfect choice. He was a good friend and well accepted among the other students.

But he couldn't just boldly ask him. Elrod was too refined. It was one of the features that set him apart.

Elrod's carriage conveyed dignity and restraint. But that was to Blaine's advantage. If Elrod could be impressed, it would carry extra weight.

The two were also rivals in some vague way.

Elrod's composure emanated from within. The fact it appeared effortless was somewhat annoying. Elrod could do with being brought down a peg or two.

There was also the matter of opportunity. This is where Elrod fit the bill perfectly.



“Three Scoops” Is A Blast!

Alex Carrick

Description

"Three Scoops" Is A Blast! is a collection of short stories set in the past, present and future.

While this second installment in the "Scoops" series does contain some stories about the family and the modern work environment, it branches off into somewhat longer fictional pieces than appeared in Two Scoops. These latter tales wander through time and space or consist of made-up conversations that take amusing, ironic or unexpected turns.

Praise for "Three Scoops" Is A Blast!

"Just like your first book, this is a hit. Everyone should grab a copy!"

"Alex Carrick has surpassed himself and brought back the charm of the perfect short story. You will not be disappointed."

Excerpt

The Wizard and the Rose

Liz Stuckey's marriage to her husband, Brian, was not without its rewards. First, there was their daughter Abby who was a delightful child of eight and accounted for much of Liz' appreciation of life. Then there was her comfortable existence in the suburbs, with a 3,000 square-foot home and a Lexus in the driveway. Of course, it was Brian who drove the Lexus, but the cachet still enveloped the whole family. Liz drove a serviceable but hardly glamorous Dodge Caravan.

Brian, however, was another matter. Most nights, he wasn't home. He either stayed late at work or he was out with the boys, playing in a house-league game or hanging around a tavern watching one of Toronto's numerous professional sports teams on big-screen TV. Both Liz and Abby felt some sense of betrayal and abandonment, but most of the time, they got by alright.

Liz had her own pre-occupations buried in her family history. There was a matter about which she felt a weighty sense of obligation. Perhaps there was more she could have done. Liz' older brother Edward had turned into a troubled young man. Throughout his university years, his professors marked him as brilliant. But he'd been overwhelmed by emotional problems.

Try as they might, the Smith family elders had never been able to rescue him from his demons. Bouts of rehab and mood-altering drugs all came up short. The upshot was Edward disappeared into the legions of the homeless in the city's core when Liz was only in her teens. She'd been too young to do anything about it then and her sense of loss and impotence never left her. There was no doubt in her mind she still had a duty to perform.

Since her father died and her mother's health deteriorated, mainly due to heartache, Liz had adopted a new routine. For the past decade, there was one day a year when Liz would go to her friend Cynthia's florist shop and purchase two dozen yellow roses. Cynthia would usually throw in an extra one for good measure, bringing the total to 25. Liz would sit in her car and carefully cut each blossom to a length of five or six inches, also snipping off the thorns along the remaining stems. Then she would drive downtown. This was a journey that always threw her into heightened anxiety, not only due to the traffic but also on account of what she imagined she might find when she got there. She never wavered, though, and proved she was a trooper.

She'd park the car around Sherbourne and King Streets and make her way west on foot. Along the route, she'd pause when she encountered some derelict soul and hand them one of her roses, all the while checking if a flicker of recognition might cross their face or creep into her own. Originally, she had shown pictures of her brother to some of the people she met, including social workers and the "soldiers" of the Salvation Army. Lately, though, she'd given up that effort.

Life on the streets was hard on people and the change in appearance in a short period of time could be unbelievable. She wasn't even sure what she would do if she did meet her brother. It wasn't as if she could take him into her home. His problems had always been too deep and ingrained. But she had to try to find him if for no other reason than to let him know she cared.



“Two Scoops” Is Just Right

Alex Carrick

Description

This book contains more than just stories about the family. Some entries are dappled impressions of modern life. Some are comedy bits, with the odd gem of a punch line. Others are lighter than air and rise up like whimsy. Others still have a slightly more serious intent, with surprising twists.

These funny, short original stories first appeared on the website: www.alexcarrick.com.

Mr. Carrick has been a leading economist in the North American construction industry for over 30 years. In early 2008, he was asked by his employer to put together an economics blog. He approached this with a good deal of trepidation, worrying about whether he would have enough material and if he could do it justice.

He quickly found he enjoyed the experience. So much, in fact, that he began to branch out with humorous lifestyle blogs he was composing on the weekends and at night, just for fun.

It is these entries he would like to share with you.

Praise for "Two Scoops" Is Just Right:

5 Stars... A choice pick for short fiction fans. ~ Midwest Book Reviews.

Really funny... If you want a good laugh (and who doesn't) you MUST pick this book up. MUST. ~ The Book Journal

A fun read... If you want a good laugh buy this book, read this book, then buy one for a friend. ~ Barbara Kent, Success Books

Who knew an economist could have a sense of humour? ~ PaulTheBookGuy Podcast

Excerpt

There can only ever be the One Dog

Now that I am in my sixties, I have to work a little harder to remember that snow has provided some of the best moments of my life. Even now, when I'm out walking our dog, Daisy, after a heavy downfall, the beauty can leave me awestruck and feeling young again. The smell of ozone goes straight to one's pleasure centre and the skin tingles. When all is fresh and virgin white, no Christmas card can quite capture the moment.

Daisy is the best dog I have ever had the good fortune to share my life with. She has the nicest disposition and she's also a ranking beauty on any creaturely terms. Her face is what a doggie angel's must look like, if there is a heaven for her kind.

But she will never be the one dog that is all entangled with my memories of youth and fresh-faced fun. That distinction is reserved for Caesar, a lab and boxer cross that was my family's pet when I was a teenager.

I am reminded of this because snow was Caesar's element. He and I would go out into the yard on a wintry day and I would throw snowballs he would chase and catch.

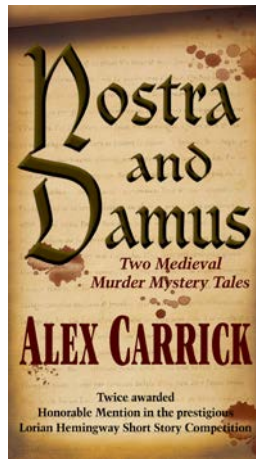
Caesar was an Olympic-calibre athlete. He could jump up, contort and snare just about anything. On days when we'd stay indoors, he was my goalie in the basement. I would fire tennis balls at the wall with a hockey stick and, most of the time, I couldn't get the ball-puck past him.

In summer, at the cottage, Caesar would actually dive under the water to retrieve rocks. Everybody up and down the beach knew him. He was a local character with a stature far above my own.

As much as he was a personality on his own, there are also the memories of what we unintentionally did to him. He was too exuberant. There was no way he could stay out of trouble. Plus my father was a persuasive argument or two short in his dog-whispering skills.

Late at night, if we'd stop for gas on a road trip and most of our family (comprised of dad, mom, my younger sister Anne and me) was asleep, Caesar would manage to escape undetected from the car and we'd leave him behind. An hour later after reversing our journey, we'd return to find him sitting by the side of the road. He never lost confidence that we would come back.

We set him on fire a couple of times. I know how horrible this sounds, but it was easier to do than you might think. Our cottage in the 50s and 60s had a wood stove that regularly needed cleaning. Dying embers would spark out onto Caesar's back and singe off patches of fur. Then we'd have to chase him around with a blanket to smother the budding flickers.



[Nostra and Damus](#)

Alex Carrick

Description

Two medieval murder mystery tales.

“Nostra and Damus”: Pure-at-heart sisters confront evil brothers while trying to escape persecution and violence. A medieval short story/novella featuring prophecy, murder and the mysterious power of twins. Intricate plotting and a “gotcha” ending. According to one review, “rich, lavish, perhaps even cinematic”.

"Foil's Forsaken Folio": A young actress takes charge of her destiny in a most unseemly way. A story with a modern Shakespeare feel. A medieval murder mystery. GLEE-like with a Hamlet hero, who's living at Lady Macbeth's house. Intricate plotting, lots of fun.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

Beginnings oft times are brutal. Unfortunately, so are endings.

In between is mostly a race.

A mad dash to grow up, acquire knowledge and earn a living, whether honestly or not.

Events spin out of control. The passing show's a blur.

On the final leg, if we're lucky and fate hasn't already intervened, we race towards death.

By the time the finish line appears, speed has become an addiction.

That's not where Frieda was currently situated.

Her world was only beginning to accelerate.

On this night, both sides of life's conundrum – birth and death – would be in evidence.

Circumstances were intervening, both favorably and with feigned indifference.

Frieda was lying flat on her back in a horse-drawn trailer on a lord's estate.

She was in pain extremis.

Through no fault of her own one of the most natural things in the world was leading towards a frightful denouement.

The contractions had started at sundown, after a long shift of working her crystal ball.

Frieda had been fleecing the rubes in the local village. Their concerns were all trivial matters.

They'd come to her for advice on the most mundane of concerns.

Would my bean crop be plentiful this year?

Where will I find my abiding love?

How can I cure this rash?

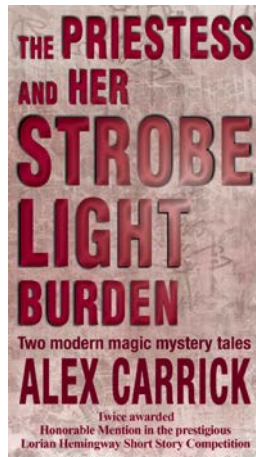
She had the potions and spells that could get her into trouble if the law made an appearance. She knew her calling wasn't witchcraft, but others in authority weren't likely to see things her way.

The social structure around which she orbited was fragile and explosive. Violence could break out too easily if allowed a chance.

Two man-made props kept human affairs under control, the nobility and the church.

The biggest fear among her family of travelers was the latter. If the religious authorities came a-calling, Frieda might be dragged off as a sorceress and burned at the stake.

That wasn't the source of her present predicament.



[The Priestess and Her Strobe Light Burden](#)

Alex Carrick

Description

Two modern magic mystery tales.

"The Priestess and Her Strobe Light Burden". A ghost story based on a family's mysterious and often tragic history. Where are the fathers? One woman finally breaks the cycle, but must take charge and exact retribution after a terrible accident.

Features plot twists that will appeal to readers fed up with the modern traffic scene.

"Physician to Precarious Longings". A hanky-wringing, bring-tears-to-your-eyes romance. More literary, poetic and sentimental than Mr. Carrick's usual. One comment: "Astonishingly rich, sumptuous writing."

It's a warm-hearted story, allowed to develop at its own pace, that will surprise and move you.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

Early spring, Barrie, Ontario:

The first officer on the scene struggled to come up with a reaction.

He thought it wasn't much of a "scene" per se and there might not have been a crime.

This sort of thing was a common occurrence.

It would have to be checked out, nonetheless.

What a bother on his day off.

What was perhaps most unfortunate was the location. It mattered as much as the event.

The police were always finding abandoned cars. Their hulks were likely to appear almost anywhere.

This time, though, the vehicle in question was a Mercedes C-Class sedan.

Regardless of the year or condition, that wasn't the kind of automobile that got left behind very often.

Yet there it was, sitting bold as daylight at the back-end and bottom of the quarry.

Anybody could have cut through the chain on the flimsy gate and deposited the car, stolen or otherwise.

Upon reflection, the entrance was still intact when the officer reached the grounds early that morning.

He remembered getting out of his own standard-issue vehicle and using a key on the padlock.

Maybe somebody had found access from an adjoining property. He'd check that out in a minute.

Could it be there was a body in the trunk? Or was the car used for a getaway in a robbery?

It wouldn't do to get lost in speculation.

He'd start by running the plates. Hopefully, they'd be in the system and the matter would be quickly resolved.

Almost assuredly the location would turn out to be a coincidence.

The gravel pit was used as a police firing range throughout the week.

That's why the officer was there, to shoot off a few rounds in a spot that was perfectly safe.

On the floor of the quarry, the sandy and stone-pitted walls would absorb any stray bullets.



Ten Tales of Tilted Love

Alex Carrick

Description

Ten Tales of Tilted Love is the first in a series of short story compilations by Alex Carrick. Sometimes serious but more often light-hearted and almost always insightful, these pieces are sure to entertain and surprise. Skillfully crafted and mainly written to be fun for readers, they can also bring a tear to the eye when the narrative warrants.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Chapter titles: (1) Mystery of the Witch's Knickers; (2) Ms. Phitts and Mr. Gatheral Spar Two Rounds; (3) Real Estate Purgatory; (4) The Wizard and the Rose; (5) An Imaginary Friend of an Imaginary Friend of Mine; (6) Best Valentine's Day Present Ever; (7) The Madame Lazonga Defense; (8) Platter and Glance; (9) Kiss Me Soft, Kill Me Quick; (10) The Ten Minute Date that Changed Everything.

Excerpt

Mystery of the Witch's Knickers

Griselda Beamish was happier than she had been in a hundred years. While others of her kind were having trouble adjusting to modern times, Zelda embraced the new. All of the most recent advances in technology made her life simpler.

There were opportunities she could never have imagined before. Take her job for instance. She worked from her pretty colonial two-story in the suburbs as a telemarketer under contract.

It didn't bother her at all when the people she called got mad and screamed she was a witch, then hung up. "You got that right, sweetheart" she'd say to herself.

She particularly liked the hands-free option that came with some cell phones. She could be brewing up one of her imaginative concoctions and never miss a beat.

Zelda started in the business with intimate chat lines. Her voice and manner were well suited to stringing some poor sucker along.

When she asked, “So big boy, can you imagine what I’m doing right now?” very few of her clients guessed she was in the process of stir-frying and eating a bat.

But even Zelda found the phone sex to be tawdry, although it did teach her there were a lot of lonely people out in the stratosphere.

It inspired her to begin work on her greatest creation, a love potion for the masses. This led to frustration. She could never get the ingredients quite right. There was always something missing.

Modern devices did come in handy, though. For example, she used her top-loading washing machine to mix her ingredients. It was a lot easier than all that shaking and stirring nonsense.

One special day in early spring, the usual eye of newt, toe of frog and other staples from her unsavory inventory were churning as she added a Barbara Cartland novel for romance and a hockey puck to provide body.

It was a familiar failing formula on its own, but likely to yield a worthy base. That’s when the doorbell rang.

It was the Glad-‘e-ate-‘er pizza delivery boy. The company milked the pun in its commercials, but it also required its staff to dress in full faux Roman gear. The logo on the box was a trident.

Zelda paid the gawky young man the billed amount plus a healthy tip and sat down at the kitchen table to enjoy her meal.

When she finished fifteen minutes later, she remembered an unfinished chore. During her morning jog, she’d made a mental note to wash her sneakers. She returned to the laundry room and flung her running shoes into the machine.

Too late, she heard the splash and recalled she had a formula brewing. That made her laugh and she stood back for a few minutes while the pulsating action tossed the mix to and fro.

Finally she stopped the machine and immersed both forearms to retrieve her footwear. The doorbell sounded again.

She grabbed hold of her wet shoes and left them to drip and dry on a floor mat. Despite her best efforts, her hands were still clammy and smelly when she answered the door.

“I’m sorry to bother you ma’am, but did I leave my sword here?” Halfway through his question, there was a remarkable transformation in the young man’s face.

This wasn’t the old crone he’d met earlier. He was now looking at a vivacious beauty who was the answer to all his tasteless fantasies.



Ten Tales of Spotty Ruin

Alex Carrick

Description

Ten Tales of Spotty Ruin is the second in a series of short story compilations by Alex Carrick. Sometimes serious but more often light-hearted and almost always insightful, these pieces are sure to entertain and surprise. Skillfully crafted and mainly written to be fun for readers, they can also bring a tear to the eye when the narrative warrants.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Chapter titles: (1) One Thousand Years of Baked Goods; (2) Giving a Finger to the Moon; (3) A Father and Son Explore Some Grey Areas; (4) Herb Green Discusses His Finances in Four Letter Words; (5) Saved by a Hare's Breath; (6) Two Men Who Thought They Knew People; (7) The Weatherman, the Economist and the Gypsy Lady; (8) Fuzzy on the Details; (9) Witness to a Backyard Execution; (10) Queen's Jester to King's Betterment.

Excerpt

Giving a Finger to the Moon

Frank had learned how to control his dreams. He had never experienced nightmares before. That's why the past several months were so disturbing for him.

His power over dreams first came when he was a young boy. He'd perused a magazine photo of Michelangelo's famous scene on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome's Vatican. It depicted Adam, from Genesis, receiving the electric shock of life with an outstretched finger. Ever since, Frank used that mental image to adjust his dreams in any way he liked.

Whenever dream sequences seemed to be taking a darker turn, he taught himself to employ a simple trick. He would snap his imaginings back to a dark country lane at midnight. High in the sky, between a lacy veil of branches, a full overstuffed moon would hang bright and shiny.

From out of the horizon on Frank's left, a giant finger would reach across the sky and push the moon's bulbous presence. That action would be the equivalent of hitting a reset button. The former awkwardness would immediately vanish and Frank would be transported to a different place, to enjoy ethereal good times once again.

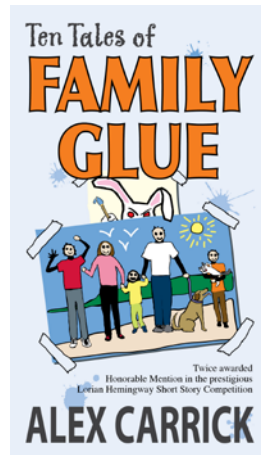
His life was fairly sunny to begin with. He met with mostly success, first in his academic endeavors, then in his business ventures. He usually slept with a sound conscience.

In his dreams, he'd be the star quarterback on a professional football team. Or the best hockey player in the world. The ladies would adore him. Their shapes came in all varieties and guises. He travelled the phantom world and was given the keys to the kingdom wherever he alighted.

That's the way things had been until a couple of months ago. Suddenly everything was altered. Whenever he walked down that back country lane, the tree branches would bend over and block out his sighting of the moon. He'd hear some distant music that was familiar and haunting, but frustratingly inaccessible.

Then out of the blackness, they would emerge – the crazed-eyed and clearly mad creatures doing their slow dance. It was a league of zombies advancing relentlessly and voraciously to embrace him. Later than usual in life, he was acquiring a familiarity with night-time dreads.

Frank would wake up with a start in a cold sweat and be afraid to go back to sleep. This was leading to a persistent insomnia that was affecting him badly. Going to bed was no longer a pleasant experience. His nocturnal misadventures did open his eyes in another way, however.



Ten Tales of Family Glue

Alex Carrick

Description

Ten Tales of Family Glue is the third in a series of short story compilations by Alex Carrick. Sometimes serious but more often light-hearted and almost always insightful, these pieces are sure to entertain and surprise. Skillfully crafted and mainly written to be fun for readers, they can also bring a tear to the eye when the narrative warrants.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Chapter titles: (1) My Wife and I Argue over a Plant; (2) Taking Someone Else's Child to the Cottage; (3) Walking Daisy - Over the Dunes and Around the Bend; (4) Revenge of the Beaster Bunny; (5) My Wife and I Argue over our New i-Phone; (6) A New National Holiday Based on Doing Nothing; (7) Dancing the Family Man Shuffle; (8) Floaty Boat Weekend; (9) There can only ever be the One Dog; (10) Every Family Lives by its Sayings.

Plus three Bonus titles: (11) Marriage and Multi-taking; (12) High Finance, Carrick Family Style; and (13) Donna and I Go Hollywood.

Excerpt

Walking Daisy – Over the Dunes and Around the Bend

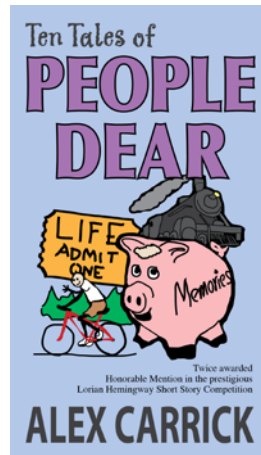
I walk our dog Daisy along the beach at our cottage early in the morning on weekends and holidays whenever I can. It's absolutely gorgeous and mostly quiet and undisturbed, except for one thing – other dog owners and their canine pets.

It doesn't seem to matter at what time Daisy and I go out, from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., we keep running into other owners and their dogs. It's the "brotherhood of the dog" and there are two problems with this. First, I don't want to be part of it. And second, Daisy does. This has led to some embarrassing scenes.

The stretch of beach we frequent on Georgian Bay is about a mile long leading to promontories at either end. We start in the middle and walk to the south point and back. Others follow a similar path or go in the opposite direction. We can pass each other once or twice. This routine, which leads over the dunes, sends me “around the bend”.

The other owners and their dogs gather in packs. Apparently they have a lot to talk about and their dogs are best buddies. Daisy and I come along and I have trouble getting her past them. I’m sure I seem unfriendly. Well, actually, I am unfriendly. I’ll growl out a “Hello” or “How you doing?”, but I just want to move on by.

I need the exercise of a brisk walk. Lollygagging around doesn’t cut it for me. Walking the dog isn’t the whole focus of my life. I want to get to the point and back, and then go home and have breakfast. Plus the other owners are happy couples or at least convivial acquaintances out for a stroll together. Do you think I can get my clan up and out with me at this time of day?



Ten Tales of People Dear

Alex Carrick

Description

In this 4th volume of his "Ten Tales" series, Alex Carrick offers 10 exceptional tales of family, friends and the people we hold most dear. This mini-anthology is certain to delight, with insights into the core relationships readers will relate to.

Chapter titles include: (1) The Size of the Skip; (2) Why'd You Leave Me in the Lurch?; (3) The Mechanized Sorting Day of the Dead; (4) Lenny and Keith Flounder in the Shallow End; (5) In Memoriam, Life Magnifico; (6) The Lord's Rogue Locomotive; (7) The 'Oh I Wish I'd Been There' Club; (8) A Dystopian View on Being Ripe; (9) Copycat Commute Concerto; (10) Undeterred She Forged Ahead

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

The Size of the Skip

****Honorable Mention ~ Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition****

The man, his son and his daughter had a routine when they went for a bike ride. Taking point position would be the son, about to turn age 12, on a medium-sized bike. In the middle would be the daughter, just short of 8 years old, on a small but not too small bike. Bringing up the rear and keeping an eye on the whole convoy, the 50-something man was on the biggest bicycle of the three.

They would ride in tandem down the street that ran past their cottage and up and down the undulating hills that made their community such a pretty place in which to live. White pine, spruce and cedar mainly hid the oak and maple that came to the fore in the fall when the leaves changed color. Multi-hued and variously-sided cottages were set back on sandy soil.

There was one biggish hill they liked to pretend was a monster. They called it San Garganza for no particular reason, except it sounded like the kind of place where the souls of dead bikers might have made their heads-over-heels exits. It was fun to pretend they were scared by the place. The pot-holes on that particular stretch of pavement were a bit of a safety hazard.

Most often, the rides were pure enjoyment with not much to upset the pleasure of the experience. There were a few cars and trucks that would drive past and sometimes annoyance was expressed when it was obvious someone was driving too fast through what was basically a residential community with quite a few kids. All in all, the man knew his children would remember these rides with fondness when they grew up and had families of their own.

It was the spring of the year and the three of them were particularly glad to be out for their first ride. Winter in the city had been medium harsh, with an average amount of snowfall. The father had been working quite hard and while he had not by any means ignored the children, it was easy to underestimate how much they'd grown up.

Leaving their wife and mother behind to attend to some womanly matters, and because she needed time to herself every now and then, the outbound ride from the cottage was uneventful. Including the plummet down San Garganza hill, the journey took twenty minutes to reach the local playground with a swing, slides and other contraptions such as monkey bars at different heights. They each took their turns doing silly things, including the man, although he did also rest on a bench for a while. After half an hour they were ready to head home again.

Something about the moment quietly overwhelmed the man. Perhaps it was the perfection. Not purely perfect but as close to perfect as anything was going to be in this life. Here he was on a beautiful spring day with two of his three children and they were all feeling young and coltish.

With age, the man had come to realize that, at its core, the nature of time is illusory. The body is merely a shell to the mind. Memories are skipping stones with their immediacy undimmed by the size of the skip. It had been only a hand wave ago when each of the children was a baby and needed a good deal more attention than they truly required now.



Ten Tales of Sunny Lift

Alex Carrick

Description

In this 5th volume of his "Ten Tales" series, Alex Carrick pens 10 uplifting short stories that are sure to bring a smile to readers. These delightful tales are full of humor and fun, perfect for when you need a quick "pick-me-up".

Chapter titles include: (1) Proper Young Ladies Should Never...; (2) The Devil Pulls a Fast One; (3) Caboose Follies; (4) The Wise Old Rooster; (5) The Ethical Auctioneer; (6) One Shot in the Hot Seat; (7) The Red-Suit Mistletoe Initiative; (8) The Tooth Fairy Must Work for the Government; (9) Spartacus the Kite; (10) One Fib Too Far

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

Caboose Follies

****Honorable Mention ~ Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition****

He'd gotten himself into this mess by volunteering. That's what happens when you're an eager beaver. He'd never been one before and he wouldn't be one next time.

What had he been thinking? Surely he knew better than to draw attention to himself. Oh well, too late. He needed to get on with it.

He also knew there were hundreds of similar articles in those ridiculous magazines one found in variety stores or pharmacies.

On the front cover was usually some pretty young actress trying to move up from teenage roles to adult parts. Some agent had convinced her she'd get more exposure by, frankly, exposing herself.

In bold type spaced along the edge of the photo would be the enticing words, “Take This Test. What Kind of Sex Life Do You Have? How Do You Rate Your Partner?”

Or “Ten Things You Must Know to Maximize Your Pleasure.”

In the kind of publication he worked for, there were the same kinds of games, only dressed up in finer garments. He held a junior position with the business section of a well-known Toronto newspaper.

So the question was more likely to be, “How do you rate your boss?” There were usually half a dozen choices. Control Freak; Micro-manager; Motivator; Delegator; Schmoozer; or Holy Terror?

It became more interesting when comparisons were made between management styles and the animal kingdom.

“Is your boss a lion? A dog? A duck-billed platypus? A lemming?”

Sure this was silly stuff, but even supposedly sophisticated readers lapped it up.

Some of the tests were meant to be semi-serious. Most were designed for pure enjoyment.

Fitting into the latter category, and making the supposition it hadn't been done before, an idea popped into his head over the weekend.

How about categorizing workers according to songs about railroads?

When the first several examples came easily, he became overconfident.

It all seemed a huge mistake now. But he'd felt compelled to take action of some sort.



[Ten Tales of Frothy Play](#)

Alex Carrick

Description

In this 6th volume of his "Ten Tales" series, Alex Carrick presents a selection of 13 playful short stories (10 plus 3 bonus tales!) that are sure to delight. These mini-anthologies are designed to offer a generous sampling of Mr. Carrick's work.

Chapter titles include: (1) Bad Starts to the Working Day; (2) For Daisy, Life is a Stretch; (3) The Seagull Poet of Butter Bay; (4) Chasing a Murderer into Polar Bear Country; (5) Knowing when You've had Enough of Your Summer Holiday; (6) Canadian Male Pick-up Lines; (7) Which Letter of the Alphabet is the Funniest?; (8) A Dozen Answers to One Osama Bin Laden Mystery; (9) A Mathematical Proof Economists are Sexy; (10) Ode to Canada's National Game (no, not hockey) as well as the Bonus Extras: (11) Spotting the Space Aliens Among Us; (12) The Most Serious Letter in the Alphabet; (13) Marshall of Cahoots

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

The Seagull Poet of Butter Bay

In a vision, he'd once seen another seagull in a top hat dancing at the Trocadero. It was the most elegant thing ever. He became entranced by imagery and longed to give expression to his own special voice. There was no doubt. He was a poet at heart.

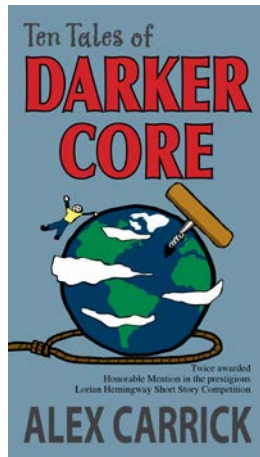
That's what his girlfriend, Sandy Barr, told him. Never mind, he knew the truth anyway. He was always functioning with his head in the stratosphere. There was something about it that felt so right. He knew it was his true calling.

He was a vagabond, a troubadour, a traveling jester, riding the winds and sometimes performing for his meals. But he had higher aspirations. He wanted to put his experiences in words. His world was something that needed and cried out for sharing.

He'd breathed in autumn's tangy smell from wood-burning stoves; felt the sharpness in the air as winter's cold grip crept in. He'd seen the brightness bloom as spring's healing bonnet led to summer's torpor and absorbed the splintery hues of water in all its seasons.

He knew writing poetry was no path to riches. That was okay with him. Few seagulls achieved worldly success. Jonathan Livingston had been a rare exception. For a while, Johnnie L. had been able to enjoy a high life based on royalties. Then the fortune ran out and existence depended on scraps the same as for everyone else.

Still, he was bothered by some misconceptions about his brethren. The bad thing that humans said about seagulls, that they were all scavengers, was a licorice-hearted lie. Humans thought they were so smart. What did they know? Did they think all his swooping and swirling in flight was just for fun? No, it was sky-writing in 3-D.



[Ten Tales of Darker Core](#)

Alex Carrick

Description

In this 7th volume of his "Ten Tales" series, Alex Carrick presents a selection of 13 twisted short stories (10 plus 3 bonus tales!) that take a somewhat ironic look at relationships. These mini-anthologies are designed to offer a generous sampling of Mr. Carrick's work.

Chapter titles include: (1) Death of a Mattress; (2) Gravity's Absence; (3) The Frightening World of Drug Disclaimers; (4) An Unfortunate Dog Walking Incident; (5) So You Think You Know Flop Sweat; (6) Pedro Martinez' Incredible String of Good Luck; (7) A Curious Case of Bottled Up Passion; (8) That Would Be Naïve of Me; (9) The Melancholy Fog Harvester; (10) Trap; as well as the Bonus Extras: (11) I Got Robbed by a Liquor Store; (12) Reminisce Once Too Often (13) Forever Running Late.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

The Melancholy Fog Harvester

Evening's end was nearing and I'd run out of milk and snacks. Besides, I wanted some fresh air.

That's how it came about I was on my way to the local Daisy Mart before it closed at ten p.m.

You don't get fog in the city much anymore. Too much traffic. There's an excess of thermal currents from the abundance of people, moving vehicles and general busy-rush to keep temperatures on a more even keel.

So when one does encounter it, the moment can be special. This was such an occasion.

The temperature at that time of year was ticking over from winter's frostiness to spring's balmy breezes.

The rain-soaked grass from earlier in the day lay under the caress of a blanketing warmth.

Particles of air that had formerly been invisible were now rendered substantive.

If I left the car in the garage, the journey from my townhouse to the local variety store entailed a short walk of only a quarter-mile.

It was usually a pleasant enough excursion.

I'd jaunt up the roadway in my complex, then make a sharp-right turn parallel to the public thoroughfare heading south. A sidewalk ran along the base of a five-foot fence marking the edge of my neighbors' backyards.

At the bottom of the block was a crossing at a traffic light leading to a mini-mall and my destination.

I could make the trek in my sleep. In fact, that's more or less what I had been doing of late. Ever since my former live-in girlfriend de-camped from my house.

My mood had turned sour with the continuing lack of success in my artistic career. My frustration with lack of recognition was sending my emotions on a roller coaster ride. That's what she said.

My begging her to stay got me nowhere.

Her final words echoed. "Don't bother pleading with me anymore. I'm moving out to get my head straight. But you know we'll always be friends."

In fact, in reviewing my dealings with her, the word "don't" came up so often, I'd begun to think of her name as "Don't."

I couldn't get her voice out of my head.

"Don't start with me again."

"Don't you dare."

"Don't bother trying to explain."

"Don't touch me."

It had become a compulsion, going over and over our old arguments. My mind was in a fog as thick as any literal fog.

I knew very well my bitter reflections were my way of coping. I truly missed her and was unsure I'd ever find contentment again.

I was alone, walking along the pathway in my reverie until, in the distance, a smoky shape appeared.



[Ten Tales of Quirky Bent](#)

Alex Carrick

Description

Ten Tales of Quirky Bent is Volume #8 in a series of short story compilations by Alex Carrick. Sometimes serious but more often light-hearted and almost always insightful, these pieces are sure to entertain and surprise. Skillfully crafted and written to be fun for readers, they can also bring a tear to the eye when the narrative warrants.

Chapter titles are: 1) The Grief Machine; 2) Physician to Precarious Longings; 3) Pretty Sure What Done Him In; 4) A Beatles' Legacy; 5) The Great Wall of America; 6) The Monkey, the Croc and the T-Rex; 7) Bullet Proof; 8) Anheuser-Busch the Budgie; 9) Foil's Forsaken Folio; and 10) Ornament.

Mr. Carrick is a critically-acclaimed author whose story "The Size of the Skip" - found in "Three Scoops" Is A Blast! - was short-listed for the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Award. In 2011, he received another Honorable Mention in the world-renowned Hemingway competition for "Caboose Follies", which appears in "Four Scoops" Is Over The Top.

Excerpt

Physician to Precarious Longings

What he liked about her was her laughter.

What she liked about him was his silence.

Her laughter was quiet, rich and reflective. It was doled out sparingly. When forthcoming, you knew it had been earned. It carried neither price tag, nor was gained at another's expense.

Sometimes she giggled. Those were special occasions, when they explored each other in some new emotional or physical way and surprise or shyness sought verbal expression.

Mostly her laughter was throaty, the sound an old soul makes when struck precisely-so by a perfectly-wielded gong.

His silence was the opposite of awkward. It was warm, enveloping and often humorous.

Come dance with me, his eyes suggested. In a white bright room of our own imaginings, where we're safe from outside terrors and the waltz can last as long as we like.

Banishing the fragility of existence was the chief extract from their bonding.

She'd arrived in Canada while in her teens. That was 50-plus years ago.

She'd never forget the one excellent piece of advice her parents had given her when they said their good-byes in Beijing. "When you get to Canada, buy the warmest coat you can find."

She'd come to this country to study at university and never looked back. Sure there were a few regrets and lonely times, but she managed to make friends and the years flew by.

She never did marry. There were heavy-duty romances over the years, both among her "kind" and among members of the mysterious foreign brew in which she was immersed.

Those were the spiciest concoctions though not so different as she'd imagined they would be.

Live and learn wasn't just a saying, she often thought.

In time, more of her family joined her from overseas. Her considerably younger sister followed her to Toronto. Her sibling was "lucky" in love and a wonderful son ensued.

The years continued to speed by.

It was her nephew, Irwin, who became her eventual joy. He spent a great deal of time at her place.



About Donna Carrick

An Air Force Brat, Donna Carrick grew up in locations all over Canada. Her primary influences came from small town Saskatchewan, Northern Ontario, the mining towns of Cape Breton, Northern Quebec and her birth province of New Brunswick.

An executive member of Crime Writers Of Canada, Donna volunteers her time as a mentor to aspiring CWC authors. She remains active in the Canadian writing scene, supporting Sisters In Crime, Word On The Street, Bloody Words and a variety of other venues for the literary arts.

Donna is the author of 3 mystery novels: *The First Excellence ~ Fa-ling's Map*, *Gold And Fishes* and *The Noon God*. All titles are available in paperback as well as Kindle and e-reader versions. Her 3rd full-length crime novel, *The First Excellence*, won the 2011 Indie Book Event Award for excellence in fiction.

Connect with Donna Online
At Twitter: [@Donna_Carrick](#)
My [Amazon Author page](#)
My [FaceBook](#) page
<http://www.donnacarrick.com/>
Or at [CarrickPublishing](#)



About Alex Carrick

Alex Carrick has been a professional economist covering the construction industry for the past 39 years. He writes extensively on economic matters for several newspapers, newsletters, journals and the Internet, dealing with both Canada and the United States.

He is currently enjoying his 26th year of employment with Reed Construction Data - CanaData. When asked how he has managed to achieve such career longevity, he is fond of replying, "I've done it one day at a time."

Mr. Carrick received an M.A. in Economics from the University of Toronto (U of T) in 1971. He also completed the first year towards a Doctorate while living at U of T's Massey College.

He has delivered presentations throughout North America on the Canadian, United States and world economic and construction outlooks.

Connect with Alex Online

At Twitter: [@Alex_Carrick](#)

[FaceBook](#)

My [Amazon Author page](#)

www.alex carrick.com

or at CarrickPublishing.com



LOGO DESIGN BY SARA CARRICK
Visit us at <http://www.carrickpublishing.com/>