



# CARLEY FORTUNE

*#1 New York Times Bestselling Author*

*One  
Golden  
Summer*  
*a novel*

**BOOK CLUB KIT**

# A conversation with Carley Fortune



## **What was it like revisiting Charlie, Percy, and Sam in Barry's Bay?**

Writing this book and spending time with these characters is like going back home. I grew up on the lake in Barry's Bay, and there is so much of myself in Sam and Percy. Plus, Charlie is my favorite character to write. He's a provocateur, but there's so much more to him than that—and we only see glimpses of it in *Every Summer After*, so it was satisfying to be able to give readers a fuller picture. I want readers to fall in love with him the same way Alice and Nan do.

Whereas *Every Summer After* is a book based on my childhood living in cottage country, *One Golden Summer* draws on what the lake means to me as an adult. Like me, Charlie and Alice both live and work in the city. Their time in Barry's Bay allows them to step outside of their busy adult lives in Toronto, to have a chance to reflect on where they've been, where they are, and where they want to go.

## **Readers have been waiting for Charlie's story! What was it like exploring such a beloved character's love story?**

I started thinking about Charlie's story as soon as I finished writing *Every Summer After*, well before the book was published. But after the book came out, I received so many messages from readers wanting his happily ever after. I've been approached by fans at events with pitches for who he should end up with. And I've also heard from readers who think he's a villain and totally irredeemable. Readers have their own relationship with the characters in that book, but so do I. It was crucial for me to set aside any perceived reader expectations and tell the story I wanted to tell. That meant finding a way back to Barry's Bay through a compelling protagonist with her own journey. I spent much more time figuring out who Alice was and developing her as a character before I began writing than I have with any other book. I auditioned a bunch of different main characters—even

went as far as writing 11,000 words then trashing it—before settling on Alice. It was like the literary equivalent of *The Bachelor*. But I wasn't just trying to find the right fit for Charlie. I was looking for a heroine with the kind of emotional depth and complexity that made me want to better understand her. The last thing I wanted was to write a book that pandered to the *Every Summer After* fandom. If you've read *ESA*, I hope you'll be delighted by revisiting these characters and Barry's Bay. But my hope is that *One Golden Summer* stands on its own.

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**How was your writing experience different for this novel, pivoting from dual timelines to one continuous story line?**

It turns out it's much more straightforward to write a book with one chronological story line! Funny that. I had a blast writing the book. Simplifying the structure freed me up to focus on the characters and squeeze as much as I could from every scene.

**Similar to *This Summer Will Be Different*, *One Golden Summer* portrays the depths of female relationships. What made you want to explore a grandmother/granddaughter dynamic this time around?**

I hadn't written a character who comes from a big, chaotic family before, which gave me the opportunity to look at Alice's relationships with the women within it: her mother, her sisters, and of course, her grandmother, who Alice adores. I also liked the idea of looking at intergenerational relationships (we see this with Alice's mentor, Elyse, as well), which are so valuable. I also loved the idea of a friendship between Charlie and Nan.

**What inspired Nan's character?**

She's an amalgamation of many different women in my family, but perhaps most inspired by my mom's mother, who died before I was born. I grew up hearing stories about her and my mom's summers at their family cottage. I wanted to represent a woman in the final act of her life who was vital and complex, and who isn't infantilized by the people around her.

**You include some Easter eggs within this novel (Alice did a photoshoot of Fern Brookbanks from *Meet Me at the Lake*). Why did you choose to do this, and how did you go about it?**

There's also a little wink to Lucy from *This Summer Will Be Different*. *One Golden Sum-*

mer took me back to where I started as an author. In some ways, it feels like the end of the first chapter of my career. Because of this, and because of Alice's career as a photographer, it felt both realistic and right that she was the one who tied everyone together.

### **What made you want to explore photography as a career for Alice?**

I came up with so many potential careers while I was developing Alice. Teacher. Musician. Crossword puzzle writer. What cinched photography was the idea of her having taken a photo of Sam, Percy, and Charlie when she was a teenager. I loved that as a shy teen, Alice watched them from afar, and how that allowed her to be a proxy for readers of *Every Summer After*.

Photography is fascinating to me because, like writing, it incorporates craft, art, and commerce—and I related to Alice's questioning of how to strike the right balance in her work.

### **Alice came up with a bucket list of things she wanted to do over the summer. How did you come up with these items?**

I thought about all the things a dreamy teenage lake summer involved, all the things teenage Alice specifically would have yearned for, and all the things adult Alice would only do if she were pretending she were a kid again, and it came pretty easily. I wanted it to be totally trivial and tons of fun. The idea was that while Alice and Charlie were goofing off like teenagers, their relationship was becoming far more grown-up and complicated than either of them anticipated. I wanted the story to be a bit of a rollick—full of fun and games—so that both Alice and the reader are thrown when the stakes turn out to be critically high.

### **Alice decides to shake up her career in her mid thirties, and you left your career to pursue full-time writing as a novelist in your thirties—was this an intentional parallel? And if so, what were you hoping to explore?**

I'm not sure if I'd say she shakes things up. More that she is examining how much time she spends on work that isn't filling her up. She needs to recalibrate the balance between paying the bills and immersing herself in her art. As a freelancer, she's had to say yes time and time again to forge good relationships and build a strong list of clients. But now she's in a place where she's lost her voice—she needs to learn how to speak up for herself and push her own vision forward. I loved that she decides only to work with people who she enjoys working with.

**Charlie and Alice crave a second chance at their teenage years. How did tapping into their youth push them outside of their comfort zone?**

The bucket list gives Alice permission to let loose and gives her structure for the summer. When she goes to the lake, she's daunted by the idea of so much free time. She's not a sit-back-and-relax kind of person, so even though it's a bit silly, the bucket list gives her purpose. Alice wishes she had been more confident as a teenager. She really envied Percy, Sam, and Charlie from afar—she wanted to be in the photo of the yellow boat. The summer is about her putting herself out there enough to be in the center of the action rather than on the sidelines of her life.

For Charlie's part, he just can't resist spending time with Alice. Knowing what's coming up for him in September, he's determined not to fall for anyone. But Charlie's never been very good at denying himself.

**The past is a shadow over many of your characters (Nan, Alice, Charlie . . .). What challenges did you face in writing characters living in the present while trying to heal from their past?**

I feel like that's what we're all going through every day! Like Charlie says, he's just a guy on a raft, trying to figure out his shit like everyone else—although both Nan and Charlie are in situations where they are looking back on their lives. Being at John's cottage has Nan surrounded by reminders of her time there with her husband and their best friends, while Charlie is coping with being the age his father was when he died and staring down his own mortality. Alice's wounds are fresher—her breakup and her mom moving to the other side of the country.

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**What do you hope readers take away from reading *One Golden Summer*?**

I've started giving myself a one-word motto for each book. The word for *One Golden Summer* was "play." It's both the spirit I wanted to convey to readers and literally how Alice and Charlie are spending their summer. As Charlie is so often reminding us in the book, life is short. I hope the book reminds people that spending our time pursuing the things that fill us with joy has great value. It's the lesson Alice is learning throughout the summer. I hope it gives readers permission to squeeze the most fun and frivolity out of their summer, whether that means making their own bucket list or not.

# Discussion Questions

1.

Alice spends two transformative months on Kamanisgek Lake when she's seventeen. Do any of your summer vacations hold a similarly important role in your memory?

2.

How do you relate to Alice's struggles with people-pleasing and perfectionism?

3.

Do you think "friends with benefits" is ever a good idea? Why or why not?

4.

Charlie's true motivation for pushing Alice away isn't revealed until later in the story. What did you think was behind his refusal to enter into a relationship with her?

5.

In our society, aging is particularly fraught for women. But Nan tells Alice, "It's a gift to age." What do you think?

6.

Alice finds joy in taking photographs just for the fun of it while she's at the lake. When was the last time you took on a creative project for your own pleasure?

7.

Family dynamics are explored in this book. Alice is the "turtle" of her family. Charlie is the "joker." Who are you in your family?

8.

What are the top five things on your ideal summer bucket list?

## Questions for *Every Summer After* Fans

1.

*One Golden Summer* takes place three years after the events in *Every Summer After*. Are Percy and Sam where you expected them to be?

2.

How have your feelings about Charlie changed—or not—between reading that book and this one?

3.

How does Alice compare to who you pictured as a partner for Charlie?