Matt Fletcher appears content to avoid serious relationships and to instead focus on raising his sixteen-year-old son and running his charter fishing business. All that changes when he meets his son’s young, attractive English teacher, Allison. Despite the age difference and Allison being his son’s teacher, Matt and Allison begin an intense affair. Allison supports Matt through several family crises, yet he finds it difficult to put his traumatic first marriage behind him and trust that Allison will stay in his life.

*Carolina Home* is the first book in Virginia Kantra’s Dare Island series. Perhaps because it is the beginning of a series, Kantra includes many storylines in this novel. Several dramatic elements converge and advance at any one time, and most of the storylines are not resolved by the end of the novel. Readers who enjoy this book will want to read the sequels to see how Allison resolves the conflict with her parents who disapprove of Matt; what happens to Matt’s soldier brother and his daughter (a very complicated and intense storyline that, at times, overwhelms the main story of Matt and Allison’s relationship); learn the outcome of Matt’s mother’s health crisis; and follow Matt’s son’s journey into adulthood. Kantra packs a lot of drama and a lot of characters into this novel.

Since Kantra is the author of over twenty romance novels, her readers should be prepared for phrases such as “he was a man with a man’s needs” and “those just-licked lips.” However, when Kantra steps away from the romance genre clichés and writes about life on an Outer Banks island, the writing rings true and the reader comes away with insights into the love/hate relationship between islanders and tourists, and also between the islanders themselves. Matt’s long history of flings with female tourists mirrors the attitude of the islanders towards the tourists—happy to see you, and happy to see you go.

The detachment the islanders feel towards the tourists is juxtaposed against the close, sometimes claustrophobic relationships between families that have known each other for generations. Matt bristles at the close scrutiny of the fellow islanders—especially when he wants to get to know Allison away from their intense interest. However, when tragedy strikes, he can count on those close bonds to support his family. The North Carolina feel to this book make it a good choice for a romance reader heading to the beach. The sex is graphically described so this is definitely an adults-only read.

*Carolina Home* is recommended for public libraries with a romance collection.

Linda Winkler  
Wake County Public Libraries