



## Boys in the Trees: A Memoir

*Carly Simon*

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Carly Simon

**Boys in the Trees: A Memoir** Carly Simon

**The Instant #1 *New York Times* Bestseller**

**A People Magazine Top Ten Book of the Year!**

**"Intelligent and captivating. Don't miss it." - *People Magazine***

**"One of the best celebrity memoirs of the year." -*The Hollywood Reporter***

**Rock Star. Composer and Lyricist. Feminist Icon. Survivor.**

Simon's memoir reveals her remarkable life, beginning with her storied childhood as the third daughter of Richard L. Simon, the co-founder of publishing giant Simon & Schuster, her musical debut as half of The Simon Sisters performing folk songs with her sister Lucy in Greenwich Village, to a meteoric solo career that would result in 13 top 40 hits, including the #1 song "You're So Vain." She was the first artist in history to win a Grammy Award, an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award, for her song "Let the River Run" from the movie *Working Girl*.

The memoir recalls a childhood enriched by music and culture, but also one shrouded in secrets that would eventually tear her family apart. Simon brilliantly captures moments of creative inspiration, the sparks of songs, and the stories behind writing "Anticipation" and "We Have No Secrets" among many others. Romantic entanglements with some of the most famous men of the day fueled her confessional lyrics, as well as the unraveling of her storybook marriage to James Taylor.

## Boys in the Trees: A Memoir Details

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## From Reader Review Boys in the Trees: A Memoir for online ebook

### Lisa says

I was looking forward to learning about Carly Simon's life, her processes as a singer and songwriter, and her journey to fame and maturity despite well-publicized anxieties. This memoir was unsatisfying. While I wanted to learn about Simon's personal life as it related to her music (and everything does), the book was too much about her personal life--there was too much detail and too much of the sensational. Simon was so vulnerable, and so much looking for love and approval, much of the time in the wrong places. But no one with the genius for creation that she has could be the complete mess she was and still survive in the music profession (which she almost didn't)--how did she? And how did she finally get it as much together as she has? The book takes her to about age 35, when I expect she was beginning, at last, to overcome the dreadful anxiety, depression, and mood swings she suffered and her poor relationship choices. How did that happen? In addition to her tragic, lost-puppy, truly abused self who could never stand up for the girl she was or the woman she became, especially in the context of relationships, could we have seen the businesswoman and even more of the artist? Perhaps even now she can not recognize her own accomplishments, as she certainly was unable to avoid blaming herself for her own and everyone else's poor choices, even when she was being victimized, abused, and taken advantage of. A sad story. Better for the prospective reader to spend the time and money appreciating her songs and hoping for her improved mental and physical health, if she can learn to take care of and stand up for herself.

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### Gary says

Yes, I have always been a fan....and if you are a fan of also James Taylor....yes...read this. If you love music, pop culture, literature, and enjoy reading about life in NYC, in the 60s and 70s, this book would certainly trip your trigger. Carly's writing style is free and easy, kinda like her songs.....and I learned things about her that I did not know.

I remember my brother once told me that he hated her music, and yet, if a song was on the radio, that he knew all the words, because I played the piss outta my Carly Simon records....ha. ha. ha. That made my day!!

I also found out that she has stammering issues, and trouble with her speech, and that music helped her. That she still does it when she's tired, or had a couple glasses of wine....and I too had the same struggles, growing up, and the same issues now when I am tired, or had a bit of something to drink. The embarrassment was incredible for her, as it is for me. That warmed my heart, because it felt like she and I had bond in that particular area, that nobody else would understand. Even at the age I am, I experience people making fun, and bullying me over this particular issue, and it's happened even in public places. I totally understand her situation, because I live it. You are afraid to speak a word, or have trouble saying it, without saying it out loud over and over to try to get it right, hoping it won't embarrass you, and then you hear the wrong sounds out of your mouth anyway.....so, I guess I am a bit bias in this particular category of the story of her life.

I found myself totally absorbed into her story, and totally enamored with her even more. I am even a bigger fan now, after reading her book. I plan to listen to some of her music, and also James's in the next few days. I think that is the biggest indicator of how much I enjoy this book.

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## Cathrine ?? says

### 3.5★

Carly Simon is 70 years old now (hard to believe) and she's got some stories to tell.

Based on a friend's suggestion I tried the audio version which Carly narrates. Her voice and cadence is perfect for unveiling her personal tales, after all, *nobody does it better* than the author herself. There are also layers of music in the background over particular sections. This was a really nice touch, though in some parts it was a bit too loud and competed with her soft spoken voice. I downloaded the audiobook from Overdrive and the sound quality was lacking. Worth a mention: if you love audiobooks and have a desire to set the play speed faster (as I tried to do in the first half) it doesn't work well with music in the background.

As you might expect from a musician/songwriter, the descriptive prose was lyrical and quite beautiful in sections. I do not know if Carly is wholly responsible for this or if she had help, but it was well done. She is a celebrity's daughter, a celebrity's ex-wife, and a celebrity in her own right so there is a lot of name dropping throughout the pages. I enjoyed the second half much more. As promised from another friend, the chapter with Warren Beatty was just too good; I laughed out loud on my walk. Later, it was very poignant listening to her lovely phrasing as she talked about the decline of her marriage to James Taylor, her depression and anxiety, the love for their children. I'm certain that a lot of her anecdotes and recollections would not have been as enjoyable reading a hard copy. Carly begins with her earliest childhood and takes us through the end of her times with James the first. What is not covered here is what came after; the twenty year marriage to James the second and its end after he came out as a gay man. I understand he wrote a memoir of his own but I'm happy for the story to end here.

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## Karen says

I grew up in the 70's and was a big fan of Carly Simon, had all her albums. This book was like a walk down memory lane! I found myself playing each song she talked about and I didn't want it to end, because while I was reading *Boys in the Trees* and listening to all the great songs I was a teenager again at least for a little while! One of my all time favorite songs is *That's The Way I Always Heard It Should Be*-just brilliant!

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## Jennifer says

When I heard that Carly Simon had written a memoir, I waited with "Anticipation" until my copy came in at the library. The Hollywood Reporter called this book one of the best memoirs of the year, and People Magazine named this book one of the Top 10 books of 2015 (in any category), so I expected it would be an engaging read – after all, "That's the Way I've Always Heard it Should Be." Unfortunately, this book didn't quite live up to expectations.

Simon begins (and proceeds for far too many chapters) describing her childhood and teens as the youngest daughter of Simon & Shuster co-founder Richard Simon. Way too much time is spent on the mundane, while unique and interesting stories (i.e. Jackie Robinson teaching her to bat left-handed; Benny Goodman coming to dinner) are covered with passing phrases. These chapters jump back and forth in time and I couldn't keep

track of the chronology of events.

Her story came most alive for me when she began writing about her first real foray into songwriting and performing as a solo artist. This last 60% of the book is so much better than the beginning. I loved reading about the inspiration behind her songs. The (short) chapter on Warren Beatty is pure gold.

Simon holds nothing back in this memoir. She candidly shares her struggles with depression, anxiety, stage fright, as well as the deep feelings of her heart. The chapters describing her life with James Taylor are laced with sadness now that we know how it all ends up. It's clear that she has and forevermore will love him deeply (they first met as children – I didn't know that until reading this book).

If you're a Carly fan, but you "Haven't Got Time for the Pain", skip the first 40% or so of the book and pick up right when she's starting her singing career.

3.5 stars

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## **Jeanette says**

Well, it's more like an autobiography up to age 35 than what is consistently called "memoir" in this modern age. But regardless, Carly IS honest!

What she isn't is something else altogether. Because IMHO, it's rather hard to give her praise or other nice strokes if this book reflects "her" core. Ok, three great qualities maybe. #1 would be her honesty. #2 would be the shelf holding all her musical talents in one basket (composition/ performance) #3 would be her possible good intent or capacity for trust. Um, I'm not so sure about #3.

Others complain here the book has too much of her childhood. Well, it has too much of too much. Her moods, her anxiety, her low self-esteem, her disingenuous parents' lack of moral codes or loving direction, her abuse by friends and neighbors, her lack of direction, her promiscuity, her impulse control. Yes, for a girl who states from 19 that she didn't care about money, she sure did travel and knew how to spend it. Did she believe Sarah Lawrence was free? Or the international ship voyages or rent in Europe? Some of this was sad, but not believable to her stating her "cognition" about "stuff".

Well, she is honest, as I said. Maybe.

I do disagree with most of the reviewers about there being too much of childhood and not enough of the result and productions "events". The former needed to be detailed to understand the latter. And some of her Mick, Warren, James stories were core to the book and needed to be taken in light of her abuse, IMHO.

Being near in age chronologically/era-wise, I can tell you, I love her voice and some of her songs nail it. But that her outcomes and choices were far from the "norm" for her generation. For one thing, just because of her money and connections.

And although I've enjoyed her voice and music, I could not have cared less who "You're So Vain" was about. While that question AND this book told me more than I wanted to know about that answer. With dozens of other escapades too, that she rationalizes so frequently and as "heartfelt". This is not a book I would recommend. Unless you enjoy angst and it doesn't concern you that being treated like a doormat seems to be

nearly celebrated in these many pages. It's sad. So beautiful and tall! What would she have conceived of herself if she DID have physical negatives that hindered her.

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### **Toni says**

Amazing story of Carly's childhood and life of an originally shy girl shadowed by her older sisters but overcame some of her fears and to discover music as a way to hide her stutter and find her talent. I was a big fan of Carly Simon, and of course James Taylor, during the 1970s. James' drug use was no secret during his years on top of fame mountain; but during that time it wasn't unusual. Carly hid her anxiety and depression very well. This book is a testament to her stamina as a writer, performer, wife, and mother. The photos are definitely a gift to us all as well. Highly recommend this book.

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### **Lynn says**

I am a big fan of musician memoirs but not of this book. The writing is self-conscious, self aggrandizing, and overworked. At times I thought I was reading poetry not prose (song writer occupational hazard perhaps). The book is also guilty of gratuitous name dropping and cringe worthy details of her sexual exploits.

The second half of the book improves as she chronicles her rise to fame and her storied relationship with James Taylor. Her love for him, their children, and the joys of song writing are vividly and sweetly portrayed. I listened to the audio book, narrated by Carly herself. It was a nightmare, as chapter transitions were peppered with music and she occasionally broke into song. Interesting idea, terrible results.

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### **Ali-Jae says**

Perhaps you needed to be a bigger fan, or most so motivated by who slept with whom celebrity folklore to better appreciate this work. For me, this was a 400 page People magazine, lacking the skill or prose that would otherwise hold a reader's interest who isn't rubbernecking for gossip.

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### **Barbara Sheppard says**

I guess I have discovered something about myself after reading this book. Memoirs are not for me. I have enough to worry about in my own life and do not really have the energy to fret about anyone else's. I found this book to be kind of boring and upsetting at the same time. It seems that everyone took advantage of Carly Simon and she was kind of a doormat for James Taylor. I do not care that his emotional health was fragile...he treated her like dirt and she just kept coming back for more. Was it love or stupidity? I am not sure. Maybe she kind of reminded me of me when I was young.

I felt there was too much of her early childhood. I also had trouble following the story as it seemed she jumped around a bit with the timeline. She certainly got all her famous bed mates mentioned. I did not see the merit in that but at least she put it all out there. The sadness of her childhood and almost after thought as far as rearing goes has left its mark. Too bad.

The best part of the book is the epilogue. Her backward look (after divorce from JT in 1983) and love for the quiet life she now leads on Martha's Vineyard in the house she and James built is wonderful. I'd give that part of the book. 5.

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## **Al says**

If you were a child of the Seventies, the music of Carly Simon was part of the soundtrack of your life. And since she wrote or co-wrote most of her own music, her albums were barometers of her happiness or sadness, her ups and downs from adolescent struggles to adult loves. Fans read (probably too much) into the lyrics of her songs and those of her then husband James Taylor. So, from a fan's perspective, Simon's new memoir, "Boys in the Trees" is the perfect complement to her songs with an intimate narrative and revealing backgrounds on the genesis of various songs. For example, here's the response to her first publicly singing "We'll Marry," the song that would later be named "That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be": "When the song ended, the room was utterly still, then my small audience applauded rapturously....the applause that Jake [co-writer Jacob Brackman] and I got lasted years. It was the beginning of a beat to a bigger life." The book is full of remarkably rich anecdotes of her working with Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, The Band, Harry Nilsson, Richard Perry, etc. as well as meeting famous non-music industry stars—Jackie Robinson(!), Sean Connery, Warren Beatty, Woody Allen, etc.. The publicity for the book may have centered on the famous men Simon loved, but that misses out on the central theme of the book—that she has had a remarkable career while dealing with stuttering, anxiety and self-doubt all her life. The confident image Simon projected through songs and publicity was far different from the woman struggling to raise two small children while her famous husband fought addiction. That she and her children not only survived but overcame the weight of sorrow that addiction drags on the addict's family (believe me, I know) is a testament to their strength and resilience. If coming into this book, you assumed that James Taylor would be excoriated by his ex-wife, you'd be surprised at how loving she remains of her cold and distant former partner: "How can you not love a person whose genes are in the two people, your children, you love most in the world?" I don't know if Carly Simon plans to write about the rest of her life in a sequel, but if she does I hope it won't take another four years. In the meantime, enjoy this feast for fans of her music. Highly recommended.

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## **❁ Julie says**

I listened to the audiobook\* and was completely entranced by Carly Simon's voice—no surprise—but even more amazed at her gifted storytelling skills. She holds nothing back in her beautiful and poignant memoir of her childhood through the early 80's. It was pieced together based on her personal diaries with seemingly amazing accuracy. Her stories are told from the heart, revealing intimate details and giving new meaning to her songs. I was especially fascinated by her childhood home and family life stories: her musical influences, her dad's career, all of her relationships, and so many more. I loved the story of the discovery of how music would "rescue" her from her challenges, and despite these how her musical career took off. I also enjoyed her amusing anecdotes of some of the famous men she encountered in her life: Sean Connery, Jack Nicholson, and Mick Jagger to name a few, but also the infamous Warren Beatty- a juicy story that was well worth the *anticipation*. And speaking of, what a great story behind that song! The whole demise of her marriage to James Taylor was just sad. She clearly has a beautiful soul and it's obvious she still holds him dearly in her heart. I admire her for writing such an honest memoir with what must have taken a lot of courage. It made me sad when it ended, but it hit all the right notes.

\*At times I had to turn up the volume to hear Carly's voice over the music, but I loved how the music complemented the different tones of the stories.

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## Chrissie says

I picked up this book because I enjoyed James Taylor's music back in the 60s and 70s. Carly Simon was married to James Taylor from 1972 to 1983. I also enjoyed Carly's singing. The one I remember best is of course *You're So Vain*. I thought this would be a trip down memory lane. It was that a bit, but it is much more of a look at Carly's own **personal** experiences - her stuttering, her parents' difficult marriage, the early death of her father who was the co-founder of the publishing house Simon and Schuster and how she established herself in the music industry. It is also about her marriage to James Taylor. The last half of the book centers on their marriage. You only get **her** thoughts. It is a very personal book. It is certainly not in any way a biography of James Taylor. The book ends with the end of their marriage, that is to say it covers half of her life. She married a second time. Nothing of that is here. I found her childhood years the most interesting, the first half of the book being better than the second. I didn't understand that the main focus would be her personal philosophical musings on love and happiness or her battle to overcome stuttering, depression and her feelings of inadequacy.

There is information about how her songs came to be; how what happened in her life became this song or that. There are tidbits about many of the singers of those times; she was in the thick of it all. Names are dropped right and left. Why? Because she associated with them. Drugs and infidelity and love. For me, much read as gossip tidbits. Always you have to keep in mind that this is what **she** thought. Parts were tedious; I would have preferred better editing.

There is background music played throughout the entire audiobook. This was used to create an atmosphere rather than provide information. By the end I was terribly sick of it. The same snippets were used over and over, often as schmaltzy background music to a love scene. IF music is to be used throughout I certainly don't want it played while I am listening to the text. Instead I would have preferred that after a song is discussed that song could then have been played in its entirety or at least a large portion of it.

The book was OK, but nothing special.

I did enjoy the narration by the author. I love her husky voice. This is quite an accomplishment for a woman who still today battles her stuttering.

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Do you want some of my thoughts on this while I read? I have listened to about half:

I don't consider any of the information below to be a spoiler.

Music is such a strong force in the lives of Carly Simon and her family. Music is played throughout the entire audiobook. This is not really surprising if you take into account who she is. Through singing she found a means to fight her stuttering. Who would have guessed! What you hear are not her "songs". Instead music is used as a means to create an atmosphere for the spoken words. It is a bit too loud sometimes, but it is an



interesting approach and gives a special effect. It can get sentimental. Schmaltzy. Romantic. Music can do that to you! At the beginning the music is too loud. This is a shame b/c it is at the beginning you have to hear exactly who is who in the large family. This becomes less of a problem later. I am a bit neurotic about such.

Then there is the content. It is sort of a road down memory lane, but is also about her personal family and psychological problems. I personally would never consider it worthwhile to write a book about ME. I think there is a bit of a trend nowadays for anybody/everybody to write their own memoirs.... as if everybody has something important to say! Outstanding people's memoirs I do like, and this is kind of fun, but is there really a need for this book?! I think it is more for her than for us.

So far there is very little about James Taylor, which is one of the reasons I picked up the book. You must know he was her first husband. There is a lot about the string of all her boyfriends.

Carly is now in her mid-20s and is just beginning to make a name for herself without her older sister Lucy. There is a lot of name dropping. She knows just about everybody, so now the book is not just about her personal battles, but more and more about the music scene of the era.

The earlier sections may appeal to teenagers, lots about falling in love and what it feels like to fall in love. Remember I said it got schmaltzy?! It is all very personal. She holds back nothing....well not about herself. You may think she is very different from an ordinary teenager, but she worries about the same things we all did - getting fat, losing a boyfriend and what to do with her life. Parts are quite funny.

It is amazing that given her stutter she is able to narrate the audiobook. For this she has every right to be proud! Her narration is lovely. I enjoy her husky voice.

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## **?Karen says**

A nod of gratitude to my GR friend, Jennifer, who in her great review said to skip (I skimmed) the first 40% to get right to the good stuff. Rightly so, as I wasn't the least bit interested in Simon's "mommy and daddy" episodes, but greatly interested in the evolution of her music and (I am feeling very sappy) her love life. I knew about Warren Beatty and Mick Jagger, but Jack Nicholson, Cat Stephens, and Kris Kristofferson? Good stuff!

I think by doing the audio book, I missed out on some of her shared photos, but from what I saw online, oh well. Because of the audio, I was privileged to hear her voice, her beautiful voice, singing her songs, and explaining the back stories to the words of "That's the Way I've Always Heard it Should Be," "You're So Vain," and "Anticipation." Fascinating! Her voice today is missing some of its original clarity or purity, but some of the original recordings were played too, I am sure; so... yeah--riveting and beautiful! Loved it. Not only her voice, but I greatly appreciate that she's a bit of a wordsmith. I mean, she did bring "gavotte" to light, and I looked forward to more such word choices. I felt I had to give it 5 stars just for its entertainment value.

So please take my suggestion and get the audiobook, and be sure to listen all the way past the Epilogue, through the Credits, to the end, as it ends with another song.

Played at 1.4x speed at first and then 1.2x, which worked well as she otherwise talks rather slowly.

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## **Robin says**

I've been a Carly Simon fan since 1971 when she released her first hit, "That's the Way I Always Heard It Should Be," so I waited for this memoir with great "Anticipation," but turns out the subtitle could have been "You're So Vague."

This was both fascinating and exasperating as Carly went into too much detail in some areas and not enough in others, and even though she imparted some very intimate (and many times unneeded) aspects about her life and experiences, (especially about her sexual development), she lightly skimmed or ignored other areas. Or she talked in circles or was coy about a few things had happened and I was never really clear as to what she meant (did she or didn't she have an affair with Mick Jagger?). Her prose also verged on wordy and florid, and a few times I had to reread sentences to get the exact meaning.

One of the most interesting parts of her story was the development of the song "You're So Vain" and her admission of who was the object of one of the verses (Warren Beatty, which is no spoiler because by now it's been widely reported), but wouldn't say who the others were about. My own thoughts were if one read between the lines of her other affairs and friendships, perhaps the others could be discerned--but perhaps that's just me reading too much into it.

Because I'm a fan and have waited so long to read her story, I gave this 4 stars, and since this ended with the end of her marriage to James Taylor (who comes across as a total jerk) in the mid-eighties, I hope she continues her story in another volume.

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