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Christy Miller

COLLECTION



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ROBIN JONES GUNN

Here's What Readers Are Saying about the Christy Miller series...

"I started reading the Christy Miller series when I was fourteen. I read all of them in a matter of weeks, and they changed my life. I truly feel that your books have helped me through some of the hardest times of my life."

"To me Christy is a friend. She is so real to me. I can really relate to her...I feel that my relationship with God became so much stronger as I read the Christy Miller series."

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“I am a hurricane Katrina survivor... During the time when I was in the hurricane, the Bible and the Christy Miller series were my comfort... Thank you for all the hope you have given me through those books.”

Christy Miller

COLLECTION

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TRUE FRIENDS
STARRY NIGHT
SEVENTEEN WISHES



ROBIN JONES GUNN

Multnomah® Publishers

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TEEN NOVELS BY ROBIN JONES GUNN

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Book 2: *A Whisper and a Wish*

Book 3: *Yours Forever*

Volume 2

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Book 6: *A Heart Full of Hope*

Volume 3

Book 7: *True Friends*

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Volume 4

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Book 11: *Closer Than Ever*

Book 12: *Take My Hand*

BOOK SEVEN



True

••••• *Friends*

*In memory of my mother-in-law,
Katherine Beckman Gunn.
You were and always will be my True Friend.*

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A Lightning Bolt from Heaven

“Over the years many people have given their opinions on friendship. I would like this class to work off the hand-out I’ve given you and write a three-page essay. Begin with the phrase, ‘A true friend is.’ You may use the rest of the class time to work on it. Any questions?”

Sixteen-year-old Christy Miller glanced across her English class and noticed that her friend Katie had her hand up.

“Is it okay if we use some of the quotes from the list?” Katie’s red hair swished as she tilted her head.

“Of course you may. Now, no talking. This is project time.”

Christy adjusted her long legs under the desk and studied the handout. The page was full of quotes from people like Constantine and Aristotle. She smiled when she read what Charles Dickens had to say about friends: “Friendship? Yes, please.”

Taking out a fresh sheet of paper, she wrote at the top of the page, *A true friend is...*

Only one word came to mind: *Todd*.

That was not the word she was looking for. Christy pushed the thought aside and scolded herself. *Come on, you have lots of friends. What are you doing thinking of Todd? He's not even part of your life anymore. Think, think, think. What is a true friend?*

She began to write. *A true friend is someone who sticks up for you and...*

Todd, her mind said again.

...and they always look for the best in you. A true friend likes you even when you don't like yourself very much. Then, without meaning to, she wrote, My true friend is Todd Spencer.

There. She finally admitted it to herself. By writing it down, it was as if she admitted to the world that Todd was her true friend. How did Todd say it almost a year ago when he placed the engraved "Forever" ID bracelet on her wrist? *Here's my friendship; I promise it to you. It's yours forever.*

Christy thought of how Todd had backed up that statement about two months ago. It was morning on a deserted beach. The night before, without really wanting to, Christy had agreed to start going out with Rick Doyle. There she was, in the early morning California fog, trying to explain it to Todd.

Christy tried to give back the bracelet, but Todd wouldn't take it.

"No matter what happens," he said, "we're going to be friends forever."

Then he announced that he was going to Hawaii to try out for the world-tour surfing team. She hadn't heard from him since.

Christy drew a tiny heart in the corner of her paper and let memories of Todd fill her mind. Each memory prompted a little doodle. Soon the margins danced with

sketches of a tandem bike, a picnic basket with seagulls circling over it, a bouquet of carnations, an old Volkswagen bus, and down the entire right side of her page, a waterfall crowned with a bridge across the top.

The shrill bell jolted her back to her Friday morning English class. Snapping her notebook shut, Christy grabbed her books and waited at the door for Katie.

“Did you get yours done?” Katie asked, her green eyes sparkling as though she had a secret.

“Not really.” Christy pushed back her nutmeg-brown hair. The new shampoo she had used on it last night made it too silky, and it kept falling in her face today, driving her crazy. “Did you?”

“Almost,” Katie said as they walked down the noisy hallway. “Who did you write about?”

“Well, I didn’t come up with anything final yet. I guess I’m going to have to work on it this weekend.”

“I wrote about the person I consider to be my truest friend in the whole world.” Katie’s eyes kept twinkling. “I want you to read it, but not until I’m finished.”

A horrible feeling hit Christy. *Katie’s acting like she wrote about me! Like I’m her best friend. Katie has been a true friend to me, and I’ve taken her for granted.*

By lunchtime, Christy had formed a plan. She wanted to do something that would let Katie know how much she appreciated her. They met at their usual spot outdoors. Kelley High was an older school, and their cafeteria was small and tended to be dominated by the freshmen. Most of the upperclassmen went off campus for lunch. Christy and Katie had gotten into the routine of bringing sack lunches and meeting on the grass under one of the large shade

trees. Being able to eat outside most of the year was one of the things Christy liked best about living in Southern California.

“Katie, I’m going to ask you something, and I want you to give me a straight answer,” Christy said once they’d sat down, away from the noisy crowds at the picnic tables.

“Okay, shoot.”

“I want to know what you’d like to do together sometime. Just you and me.”

“What do you mean?” Katie asked.

“What is something you’d like to do? Would you like to go shopping or what? Name it.”

“You’re sounding like something’s wrong, Christy. We do stuff together all the time. Why do we need to make special plans to do something together?”

Christy took a deep breath and stuffed the remainder of her sandwich back in her lunch bag. She hadn’t figured it would be this complicated. “Can I be honest with you?”

“No, I want you to lie to me.” Katie pushed Christy on the shoulder. “I’m only kidding! What are you being so serious about? You’re scaring me.”

“Katie, you have been such a good friend to me. I feel like I haven’t been as good a friend back to you. You’re the most gracious friend I’ve ever had.”

“Gracious?”

“Yeah, you know. Like last year when my aunt and uncle took me to Palm Springs. You didn’t get to come because of the football game. You were so gracious about it—”

“But—” Katie started to interrupt.

Christy kept going, not letting Katie have a chance to

disagree with her. “Then this summer when I went to Maui. You know I wanted to take you, but I had to take Paula with me because she was visiting that week. It was all set up by my aunt, and I didn’t have any say about who went with me.”

“I know, Christy. You don’t have to explain.”

“That’s what I mean! You’re always so supportive. You were gracious about Palm Springs and Maui. You were even gracious when Paula was a snip to you—”

“Christy,” Katie finally cut in, “you’re making it sound as though I was being heroic. I wasn’t. It killed me that I didn’t get to go with you those times.”

“But you didn’t act like it. That’s what I’m trying to say. You’ve always been supportive of me. Always.”

“Well, almost always,” Katie said. “If you will recall, I wasn’t exactly supportive when you were dating Rick.”

“Yes, you were. You just had a strong opinion about him.”

“I still have that opinion. I didn’t need to say all those things to you about him though,” Katie said thoughtfully. “You handled the situation fine without my nasty comments.”

“No,” Christy disagreed, “I needed you to say whatever you wanted to say. I needed to hear your opinion. And, as I’ve said before and will probably say a thousand times, you were right. Going out with Rick was a huge mistake.”

“And as I’ve told you a thousand times, going out with Rick was not the problem. Going steady with him was...well, if you want my opinion, it was about the stupidest thing you’ve done in your entire life.”

Christy laughed as Katie’s honesty brushed over her. “Okay, well, I guess some things I have to learn the hard

way. You know, it still hurts when I think about him.”

“Why? Because he was such a jerk, and he treated you like slime?”

“No, Rick didn’t treat me badly; you know that.”

“Oh, right. He only stole the bracelet Todd gave you, hocked it to a jeweler, and is now making you buy it back with every paycheck until Thanksgiving. Silly me!” Katie slapped her forehead for emphasis. “I guess that’s the way every girl hopes her boyfriend will treat her. I just haven’t reached a level of maturity to be able to understand such deep, caring, emotionally enriching relationships.”

“Okay, okay!” Christy threw her hands up in surrender. “You’re right! Okay? Rick was sort of a…”

“...grade-A, first-class, total jerk,” Katie filled in for her.

“I guess you could put it that way,” Christy gave in. “But he wasn’t like that all the time. There’s a tender side to him too. I’m not saying I want to go out with him again. It’s just that I don’t feel like my relationship with Rick is resolved.”

“You told him to get lost. What more needs to be resolved?”

“I can’t explain it. I’m not sure I really know. I want him to understand why I broke up with him. One of these days I’d like to sit down with him and talk everything out.”

Katie ventured slowly, “You mean the way you talked things over with Todd that morning on the beach? I mean, can you honestly say you now feel your relationship with Todd is over and resolved?”

Christy shook her head, feeling her hair tumble over her shoulders as she lowered her eyes. Uninvited tears brimmed behind her lower lids. “No,” she said softly. “It’s not over with Todd. I think about him all the time.”

“So?” Katie perked up. “Why don’t you write him? Send him a card. One of those cartoon ones. You told me your uncle gave you Todd’s address last week. What are you waiting for?”

“I don’t know.” Christy blinked back a tear. “A lightning bolt from heaven, I guess.”

“Then here,” Katie said, playfully bopping Christy on the head with a foil-wrapped Ding Dong. “Consider this your lightning bolt from heaven, and this is your message: ‘Goeth thereforeth and writeth to Toddeth.’”

Christy laughed, her clear blue-green eyes making contact with Katie’s. “Since you put it that way, okay, I will. I shalt goeth and buyeth a card todayeth.”

Katie smiled her approval, “You know, an occasional bonk on the head with a Ding Dong seems to do you some good. Remind me to do that about every fifty thousand miles.”

Not until Christy was sitting in her Spanish class after lunch did she realize that Katie had never answered her original question. Christy still didn’t know what Katie would like the two of them to do together.

About the only time they had spent together during the summer was at church. Then school started, and Christy’s job kept her busy every weekend.

When Christy started going out with Rick, Katie had talked about having the annual back-to-school slumber party at her house. Only Christy hadn’t been able to find a free weekend for the party since she worked every Friday night and then had gone out with Rick on Saturdays after work. With Rick out of the picture, Christy thought maybe she could help Katie plan a slumber party with a bunch of

girls like they'd had last year.

Christy drove right from school to the mall, where her job at the pet store started at four. Her boss, Jon, greeted her with a big smile.

"Guess what?" Jon said.

His long hair was pulled back in its usual ponytail, and he had on his typical jeans and T-shirt. Christy didn't notice anything different about Jon. It must be something about the shop.

She glanced around but didn't see anything that had changed. "I don't know. I give up. What?"

"I sold Walter this morning." Jon beamed.

Even the mention of Walter gave Christy the willies. She would never forget the night when the fifteen-foot python escaped from his cage and slithered out into the mall.

"You seem pretty happy about selling him. Beverly told me you'd had him forever. I didn't think you'd ever sell him."

"I did have him forever. Not because I was fond of Walter, but because nobody wanted to buy him. This morning some guy from Fallbrook came in and paid full price. Walter has a new home, and I couldn't be happier for him."

Jon picked up a clipboard from under the counter and said, "I've been meaning to ask you. Are you still happy with your hours, or do you want to change them so you can spend more time with your boyfriend?"

Christy felt her cheeks turn red. "Oh no," she said quickly. "My hours are fine. I don't need to change them. Really."

Jon looked Christy in the eyes with the same scrutiny a doctor uses when checking a patient's throat. Then, as if he had found what he was looking for, he looked back at his

clipboard. "I'm sorry."

Christy felt a little confused by his examination. "You're sorry that I don't want to change my hours? I can change them or trade with somebody else if you need me to."

"No, your hours are fine with me. As a matter of fact, they're great. I'm sorry you broke up with...what was his name?"

"Rick." The moment Christy said his name, she felt as though she had bitten into a wild, tangy raspberry.

"His name is Rick," she added, hoping to purge herself of the raspberry sensation. "We broke up about a week ago. But it's fine, really. We're just friends."

Jon looked her in the eyes again. Then he flashed her a big grin, snapped the clip on top of the clipboard, stuck his pen behind his ear, and turned toward the back of the shop. "Well, I guess there comes a time when you have to say good-bye," he commented. "It's not always easy, but you've got to let the ol' snake go. Let somebody else have him for a while."

Christy was about to jump in and defend Rick when Jon turned back to face her and said, "You know I'm talking about Walter, of course. That ol' snake, I mean."

"Right." Christy smiled back. "Walter. Of course. I knew that."

She slipped her backpack under the counter and took her position behind the register.

Guys. Who needs them? Not me.

Christy began to straighten the countertop, ready to concentrate on work.

I'll show Jon and Katie and everyone else that I don't need a guy in my life.

Taking a deep breath, she mumbled, "Now, if I can only