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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 wish I could find the words to tell you what a blessing your books have been! I've learned a lot from Christy's character, and Todd makes me want to wait for a hero! 😊 Please keep writing!"

"Before I finished the first chapter of *Summer Promise* I was hooked. I had always called myself a Christian, but it wasn't until your books that I really knew what it meant to lay down my life to Jesus Christ. You would not believe what a difference God has made in my life already. Thank you!"

"If people ever tell me that being a Christian is boring, I tell them to go read your books! They helped me to start living for God and to look to my Bible for answers to everything."

"I read the Christy Miller books during a really stressful time, and they were like a calm in the storm. I have learned so much from them, too! When Doug told Christy that godliness is beautiful, it was an entirely new concept to me! I will not hesitate in saying these books changed my life."

“My best friend and I have been reading your books since we were twelve years old. We love them! They have brought us closer to the Lord, and we treasure this more than anything in the world.”

“I had to read a book for school, and I chose *Summer Promise*. I never knew it would change my life. I’ve read the series at least six times. I now have a personal relationship with Christ. Thank you for being obedient to God.”

“When I was in sixth grade, my mom gave me the first Christy Miller book. These books changed my life! Please don’t stop writing until your hand falls off!”

“I’m thirteen years old, and I love your books! All my friends are reading your books, too. We wish they were movies.”

“I absolutely love your books. You are my favorite author. After I read the first one, I immediately became a Christian and turned my life over to God. I have struggled some, but your books helped me to stay on track. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for writing them.”

“I wanted to thank you for all the books you have written. They have been my joy when things are hard. Every book has been amazing.”

Christy Miller

COLLECTION

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SURPRISE ENDINGS

ISLAND DREAMER

A HEART FULL OF HOPE



ROBIN JONES GUNN

Multnomah® Publishers *Sisters, Oregon*

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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A Heart Full of Hope

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TEEN NOVELS BY ROBIN JONES GUNN

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BOOK FOUR



Surprise
.....*Endings*

*To my parents,
Travis and Barbara Jones,
who encouraged me to be
only what God made me to be—
nothing more, and certainly nothing less.*



1

Dreams for a Price

Oh yeah! We've got the spirit
Oh yeah! That cougar spirit
Say, hey! Get outta our way
Cougars are on the prowl TODAY!

Christy Miller ended the cheer with a long, leggy leap. The other girls watched her land just slightly off balance.

“Good, but try to keep your arms straighter next time,” the cheerleading adviser said.

Christy nodded at Mrs. James and tried not to feel self-conscious, even though so many girls were standing around watching her.

“And be sure you stretch out after practice today.” Mrs. James turned her attention to the next girl in line.

Stepping away from the critical stares of the varsity cheerleaders, Christy took a deep breath and silently mouthed the cheer. Keeping her arms straight, she began going through the motions again.

It seemed to Christy that the first few days of practice hadn't been very hard or very competitive. Now that it was

getting closer to tryouts, fewer girls were showing up every day. And the ones who did show up were, in Christy's opinion, all much better at jumps than she'd ever be.

"Give it a rest, Miller!" one of the varsity girls said, coming in her direction. It was Renee, a junior with short dark hair and eyes like a raven.

Christy tried to ignore Renee and finished the cheer with a solid jump.

"Give it up. You're not cheerleader material, and you know it. Besides, you're only a sophomore."

"Sophomores can try out like anyone else," Christy said quietly, lifting her damp nutmeg brown hair off the nape of her neck. She shaded her blue-green eyes from the afternoon sun and tilted her head. "Tryouts are only two weeks away, Renee. And I'm not going to drop out."

Christy meant the statement to sound firm and threatening, but it affected Renee as much as a harmless kitten batting at a thread.

"You only made it this far because of Rick Doyle." Renee flung the words at Christy. Two of her friends now stood beside her. "So don't look so innocent. We know what's going on between you and Rick."

"Between me and Rick?" Christy couldn't stand the way the three girls were staring at her. She wasn't sure what Renee was trying to prove. "Rick and I are just friends."

"Oh, right. Friends. Buddies. That explains why the most popular guy in school hangs out with a little sophomore who thinks she's going to be next year's star cheerleader."

Christy felt her heart pounding and her throat swelling.
Why is Renee all over me like this?

“Come on, Renee,” said one of the other girls, who walked over toward Christy. “Leave her alone. It’s not Christy’s fault Rick turned you down.”

Renee spun around. “Who asked for your opinion, Teresa?”

“It’s Teri. Only my grandmother calls me Teresa. ‘Teresa Angelina Raquel Moreno,’” Teri mimicked in a high-pitched voice with a heavy Spanish accent. “But you’re not my grandmother, Renee. So you can call me Teri, like the rest of my friends.”

Christy admired Teri’s friendly spunk. She obviously wasn’t threatened by Renee. Christy wished she could appear as confident as Teri. But then Teri was a junior like Renee, so that had to count for something.

Renee turned to glare at Christy with a hard, pinched expression. “You’re not good enough, Miller. Okay? You’re not good enough to be a cheerleader, and you’re definitely not good enough for Rick Doyle.” Renee turned with a flashy cheerleading swish and marched off the field with her two friends beside her.

“What was that all about?” Christy asked Teri. Her hands were shaking. “What did I ever do to her?”

“It’s not you.” Teri wrapped her long, wavy brown hair up in a knot and tried to secure it with a scrunchie. “She’s mad at Rick, and she’s just taking it out on you. Don’t let her get to you. You’re doing great, Christy. By the time try-outs get here, you’ll be ready. Don’t worry.”

But Christy did worry. She worried all the way home. As soon as she was in the front door, the first thing she did was call her closest friend, Katie, to tell her about the incident.

“Oh come on, Christy,” Katie said in her bubbly, self-assured voice. “You know what Renee’s problem is. It’s Rick. She likes Rick. Didn’t you know that? Everybody knows that.”

“Katie, almost all the girls at Kelley High like Rick. He and I are good friends. You know that.”

“Sure I do. But Renee doesn’t. She thinks he’s taking you to the prom.”

“The prom? Why in the world would she think that? My parents would never let me go to the prom. You know how strict they are.”

“Well, get this,” Katie said. “I heard that Renee asked Rick to the prom, and he turned her down.”

“You’re kidding! Why?”

“That’s what she’s so upset about. He didn’t give her a reason, but from what she heard from one of his friends, Renee thought he was taking you.”

“No way! He’d never ask me. He could choose from a dozen girls, all seniors. Besides, I think a senior guy should take a senior girl. I mean, it’s their last year of high school and everything.”

“Christy, get a clue! He wants to take you. The problem is, he thinks you won’t go with him since you’re not supposed to date until you’re sixteen.”

Christy twisted the phone cord around her finger. “But Katie, I’m the kind of girl Rick teases and calls when he’s bored. I’m not the popular rah-rah type he’d take to the prom. He’s probably waiting to find out who’s got the best chance of winning prom queen. That’s who he’ll take.”

“Wake up, girl! Don’t you see what’s happening? Rick is turning you into the rah-rah prom-queen type. You’re like

putty in his hands. He's making you into the perfect girlfriend."

"Katie, that has to be the most ridiculous thing you've ever said!"

"Ridiculous or not, it's the truth."

A frustrating silence hung between them.

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," Katie said, all the fire doused from her voice. "But if you don't think I'm right, then just ask yourself to honestly answer one question." Katie paused.

"Yes?" Christy knew that although Katie often went overboard with her exuberance, she also could be right sometimes.

"Ask yourself, *Would I have tried out for cheerleading if Rick hadn't talked me into it and gone with me to practice the first day?*"

"Yes," Christy answered immediately. "I would've gone on my own."

"Don't answer me. Answer yourself. Honestly. And if you're honest, I think you'll see what I'm saying. Rick has more control in your life than you realize."

For at least twenty minutes after they hung up, Christy remained sitting on the hallway floor with her back against one wall and her stocking feet against the other, searching her heart for an honest answer to Katie's question.

The tricky part was, Christy had always wanted to be a cheerleader. She had thought about it a lot when tryouts were announced. But maybe Katie had a point. Deep down, Christy wasn't sure if she ever would have worked up the nerve to try out if Rick hadn't coaxed her into going to the first practice.

However, Todd had a lot to do with it too. If Katie

wanted to talk about Todd's influence on Christy, well, that was another story. She would gladly admit that Todd had a unique way of challenging her and directing her decisions. He had ever since the day they met on the beach last summer. She remembered looking up into the screaming silver-blue eyes of this tall, blond surfer and thinking how he fit her description of the perfect guy. Then she got to know him, and Todd became an important part of her life. He strongly influenced her when it came to things that mattered in her heart.

Even though Todd lived two hours away, when it came right down to it, if she had to define their relationship, she would consider Todd much closer to one day being her boyfriend than Rick. Christy and Todd saw each other only a couple times a month, but Todd was in her heart. Forever. Nothing could ever change that. And what mattered to Todd mattered deeply to Christy.

She tugged at her socks, cuffing them and uncuffing them, remembering when she had scrunched in the hallway last week, the night before the first cheerleading practice, and talked on the phone with Todd for an hour. Christy had told him all about how she was thinking of going out for cheerleading and eagerly waited for his opinion and encouragement.

But all Todd had said was, "I think if you're going to do it, you should do it for the Lord."

"You mean I should pray about it?" Christy asked.

"That's part of it. But you need to think about how you can take some risks on your campus. If you become a cheerleader, you'll have an audience."

"An audience?"

“There will be lots of people who suddenly know who you are, and they’ll watch your life a lot more closely. You can’t just blend in with the crowd anymore. Being a cheerleader might put you in a good position to let people know who you really are and what your life is all about.”

“I hadn’t thought about that.”

“Being up front can be good. It kind of forces you to take a stand for what you believe.”

Christy had taken Todd’s words to heart, and that night she had written in her diary:

God, I want to do this cheerleading thing for You. I know Todd’s right. If I become a cheerleader, people will look up to me and respect me. That will give me a better chance to tell them that I’m a Christian and maybe to invite them to church with me or something. I just want whatever is best, and I want to be a good example to others.

In thinking through the whole situation now, Christy felt certain that even if Rick hadn’t walked her to practice that first day, she still would have gone. Her heart was set on doing this, and just as Todd had advised, she would do it for all the right reasons.

“Christy,” her mom called from the kitchen, “are you off the phone yet? Dinner is ready. You need to come set the table.”

“Coming!” Christy left her cheerleading thoughts huddled in the hallway as she went into the kitchen. Her mom had made stew, which wasn’t her favorite dinner. Mom’s stew generally consisted of whatever leftovers had been in the refrigerator long enough to be unappealing if eaten by

themselves. They were all dumped into the Crock-Pot in the morning and left to simmer all day until they became “stew.”

Venturing a sniff of the concoction, Christy had to admit it smelled good. She teased her mom, saying, “Spices are your friends, aren’t they?”

“What?”

“You know how to put in just the right seasonings to make even leftovers smell as though you started fresh.”

Mom gave Christy a puzzled look.

“Never mind.” She realized what she was saying was not exactly a compliment and would be better left unexplained.

Her mother stepped in to make a familiar point. “We need to be thankful we have food on the table, Christy. It may not be fancy, but we’ve never gone hungry, and we should be grateful for that.”

“I know,” Christy said quietly. She pulled the silverware from the drawer and began setting four places at the kitchen table. The last thing she wanted to be reminded of tonight was how tight money had been since her family moved to California from Wisconsin. Or how all of them needed to work harder to stay on their budget.

At dinner, Christy’s nine-year-old brother, David, monopolized the conversation. Christy and her mom and dad all listened patiently as David reenacted, with considerable exaggeration, his teacher’s facial expression when she found gum on her shoe.

He was kind of funny, for a little brother. But Christy would never tell him that. It would only encourage his goofiness.

As soon as David excused himself from the table, Mom leaned over, and a sweet smile spread over her lips. Christy

knew that look. Her mother was trying to create an encouraging environment. Christy also knew that her mother was about to say something Christy probably wouldn't be glad to hear.

"Dad and I have gone over the paper you brought home from the cheerleading adviser, and we've decided that the only way for this to work is if you find a way to come up with half of the money."

"Half!" Christy squawked. "That's more than three hundred dollars!"

"Well," Dad said slowly in his deep, authoritative voice, "is this something you want to do? Are you willing to commit yourself to the practices and the games?"

"Yes." Christy tried hard to hold back the tears that pressed against the corners of her eyelids.

"Your mother and I think it's a worthwhile goal. It's also a big commitment. And an expensive one. We feel you should share a part of that responsibility by participating in the financial responsibility."

Christy wanted to say, "But you don't understand! There's more to this than me fulfilling my goal. Can't you see that? This is something I need to do so I can take a stand on my campus." But as usual, Christy couldn't make the really powerful words come out, and all she said was, "How am I going to come up with that much money?"

"You have to understand, Christy, that this expense isn't in our budget. But we're willing to find a way for it to work out for you if you're willing to come up with your half. You could babysit this summer," Mom suggested.

"Get a position during the weekdays with someone who has small children. Perhaps you could advertise in the toddler Sunday school class you've been helping out with the

last few weeks. You could let some of the parents know you're available."

"Babysit? This summer?" This wasn't a good time to mention to her parents that she had been planning to stay in Newport Beach all summer with Uncle Bob and Aunt Marti, just like last summer. Christy already had a long list of plans for things she and Todd would do. She hadn't even considered the possibility of staying home in Escondido all summer—especially to babysit.

"You decide how you want to come up with the money," Dad said. "If you're serious about cheerleading, we're with you 100 percent, and we'll find a way to come up with half the cost. But you've got to put in your share too. It's time you learned there are no free rides."

"I definitely want to do it. I mean, I want to at least try out and see what happens," Christy said.

Mom sat back in her chair. "Before you give such a firm answer, why don't you think about it some more. In the meantime, do you have much homework tonight?"

"Tons."

"I'll do the dishes, then," her mom said. "You can do them tomorrow night. You'd better get at your homework."

In the sanctuary of her room, Christy found it impossible to concentrate on her "tons" of homework. She went over to her dresser and picked up the San Francisco music box her aunt had bought her on their trip there last summer.

Winding the brass key on the bottom, Christy set it back on the dresser and watched the ceramic cable car move up the little hill as it played "I Left My Heart in San Francisco."

Wish I knew where I left my heart. It certainly doesn't seem to be where

it's supposed to be tonight, Christy thought. I feel pulled in so many directions.

She was convinced that becoming a cheerleader ranked as an important dream at this point in her life. It was a worthy goal. Weren't adults always telling her to set goals? She believed being a cheerleader would be something she could always look back on and say, "I did it! I worked hard, and I accomplished my goal." Plus, she would be able to take a stand for what she believed, as Todd had said.

But she never dreamed she would have to come up with half the money. And babysitting all summer was practically the last thing Christy wanted to do with her precious free time.

It seemed there were so many obstacles to her trying out for cheerleading. The incident with Renee had been discouraging enough. Now she had the money part of it to struggle with too. She never guessed it would be so hard.

Do I want to be a cheerleader badly enough to really work for it? With a determined twist of the knob, Christy wound up the music box once more. Effortlessly, the little cable car took its free ride to the top of the glassy hill.