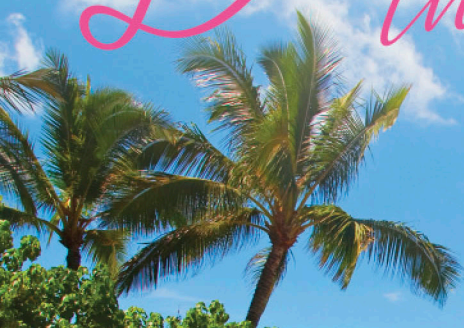




OVER 350,000 SISTERCHICKS NOVELS SOLD!

SISTERCHICKS[®]

Do the Hula



Robin
Jones Gunn





SISTERCHICKS®

Do the Hula

Robin
Jones Gunn



MULTNOMAH
BOOKS

SISTERCHICKS DO THE HULA
PUBLISHED BY MULTNOMAH BOOKS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

All Scripture quotations and paraphrases, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Message by Eugene H. Peterson. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from The New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The characters and events in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to actual persons or events is coincidental.

ISBN 978-1-59052-226-4

Copyright © 2003 by Robin's Ink, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

MULTNOMAH and its mountain colophon are registered trademarks of Random House Inc.

SISTERCHICKS is a registered trademark of Multnomah Books.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gunn, Robin Jones, 1955–
p. cm

ISBN 1-59052-226-5 (pbk.)

1. Female friendship—Fiction. 2. Women—Hawaii—Fiction. 3. Women travelers—Fiction. 4. Hawaii—Fiction. I. Title

PS3557.U4866S56 2004
813'.54—dc22

2003020681

Printed in the United States of America
2012

15 14 13 12 11 10 9

OTHER BOOKS BY ROBIN JONES GUNN

SISTERCHICKS® NOVELS

Sisterchicks on the Loose
Sisterchicks Do the Hula
Sisterchicks in Sombreros
Sisterchicks Down Under
Sisterchicks Say Ooh La La
Sisterchicks in Gondolas
Sisterchicks Go Brit
Sisterchicks in Wooden Shoes
Take Flight! a Sisterchicks devotional

THE GLENBROOKE SERIES

Secrets
Whispers
Echoes
Sunsets
Clouds
Waterfalls
Woodlands
Wildflowers

YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

The Christy Miller Series
The Sierra Jensen Series
The College Years
The Katie Weldon Series

Gardenias for Breakfast
Under a Maui Moon
Canary Island Song
Cottage by the Sea
Love Finds You in Sunset Beach, Hawaii

NONFICTION

Praying For Your Future Husband

For Cindy, who flapped the red hibiscus bedspread over the
lanai, and for Carrie, who did all the driving around Honolulu
and got only one ticket. You two are the best prayer pals a
sisterchick could ever ask for.

And for Janet, Julee, Kathleen, and Lisa,
who gently made this a better story
with their editorial expertise.

For the Daughters of Hawai'i, Calabash Cousins,
and staff at the Mission Houses Museum.
You made me feel welcome with your gracious *aloha. Mahalo.*

“A friend loves at all times.”

PROVERBS 17:17A, NIV

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?

Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.

I’ll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.

Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”

MATTHEW 11:28-29

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel
read only one page.”

— SAINT AUGUSTINE



Prologue

*L*aurie came up with the idea to go to Hawai'i. Both times.

The first time she made the suggestion was in 1983, when we were sophomores at UC Santa Barbara. I was up to my eyebrows in shattered bits of my heart when I burst into our dorm room to blurt out the news: My engagement was off. While I had been busy trying on bridal gowns and ordering invitations for the June 19 wedding, my fiancé was leaving work early to smooch with some seventeen-year-old cinnamon twist who worked at Taco Bell.

Laurie saw it coming, but to her everlasting credit, she didn't try to collect my heart's fragments and glue them back together. Instead, she administered a steady supply of tissues for my big, globby tears and listened patiently until I had no more words to spit at her.

"Hope, listen to me," she said firmly. "You're going to be okay. Better, actually."

Robin Jones Gunn

I said something about how the only thing that would make me better would be some serious chocolate. So we proceeded to the vending machine at the end of our hall and ceremoniously inserted our precious laundry quarters until all the Oreos and Reese's Pieces were ours. Returning to the room, we ate every last dot and crumb while sitting cross-legged on Laurie's sheepskin rug.

"I think we should go somewhere on June 19," Laurie said. "Someplace exotic."

"Why?"

"Because you need a fresh start. A new dream. Something wonderful to look forward to. Where should we go?"

The only place I wanted to go was a dark cave where I could hibernate for six months.

"I have an idea." Laurie rose to her feet. She fluttered her arms about to the right and then the left while awkwardly swishing her hips. "What do you think?"

"I think you need hula lessons," I said flatly.

"Exactly! I *do* need hula lessons. And so do you. That's why we should go to Hawai'i. On June 19. Just the two of us."

I let the word *Hawai'i* plant itself in my ravaged soul like a lone tiki torch flickering in the midst of all the smoke and ashes. *Hawai'i*.

All we needed was some money.

Laurie and I spent spring break in Napa Valley working at the restaurant Laurie's parents owned. We hoped for many generous tippers, but it turned out there was only one. Gabriel Giordani.

Sisterchicks Do the Hula!

Before my eyes, Laurie fell in love with this struggling artist who came to the café every day with his two daughters. His wife had passed away a few years earlier, and all the locals loved to gossip about Gabe and his paint-splattered jeans. Laurie gave them something to really gossip about our last morning there, when she kissed Gabe on the mouth, right in front of the café window.

She and I were about three miles down the road when Laurie said, “You know what, Hope? I’m going to marry that man.”

I studied her profile and solemnly said, “I know.”

I also knew that on June 19 Laurie and I would not be flying to Honolulu. Somehow, it was okay.

Many years later, when my husband and I saw one of Gabriel’s paintings in a restaurant, I told Darren that, looking back on that season of my life, I realized I didn’t need the actual trip to Hawai’i as much as I had needed the possibility of such an adventure. That was what Laurie gave me—she dared me to dream when I wanted to die.

Darren said I should get back in touch with her because true friends like that are hard to come by.

“I know,” I said. “But Gabe is practically famous now. They’ve probably moved to an estate. She might not remember me.”

“She’ll remember you.”

“I don’t know if the phone number I have is right anymore.”

“You won’t know until you dial it and see.”

But what would I say? *I miss you, Laurie. By any chance, do*

Robin Jones Gunn

you still have the key to the back door of my heart? Because I have yet to make a duplicate and give it to another friend.

No. I wouldn't call Laurie or write her. The season of our friendship had passed.

Then, as only God can, He surprised me. I think He prompted Laurie to call out of the blue just to prove that He knows me by heart. He knows what I need even when I'm too timid or belligerent to ask for it. Laurie and I had an unfinished dream. Neither of us had yet learned to do the hula.

One

The day Laurie called me she was in New York.

I was in the garage, mopping up psychedelic puddles of Rocket Pops. Our ancient freezer had coughed its last icy breath sometime during the night, and the entire summer supply of Little League frozen confections was forced to seek alternate accommodations. Unfortunately, the Popsicles tried this on their own and met with disaster.

“Gabe has meetings all afternoon,” Laurie said, after I recovered from the shock of hearing her voice in the middle of my mess. “I know it’s last minute, but I’d love to drive up to see you.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, very sure. If it’s not too inconvenient.”

I warned her about the Popsicle massacre. “And it’ll take you a couple of hours. Are you sure you want to drive?”

“Yes, I love to drive. Remember?”

Robin Jones Gunn

I smiled. Yes, I remembered. Laurie had a passion for the open road. “Are you going to rent a convertible?”

“You know it! Now don’t go to any trouble.”

I hung up the phone, rinsed my permanently cherry-scented mop, and frantically began cleaning the rest of my humble abode like Tigger on steroids.

When Laurie pulled into the driveway three hours later, she emerged from a black convertible sports car and smoothed her straight blond hair. Back in college her hair was as brown as mine.

She looked taller than I remembered. Maybe because I was feeling rather small at the moment, hiding behind the living room curtains, spying on her and wishing I had done all the laundry last night so the dryer wasn’t making that thunking noise in the background.

Laurie adjusted the collar on her crisp white sleeveless shirt and pulled off her sunglasses. For one paralyzing moment, I couldn’t imagine what we would talk about.

I opened the front door, and miraculously all time and differences evaporated. We hugged and starting to talk over the top of each other’s sentences, as if we were back in our dorm room. All that was missing were the Oreos and Reese’s Pieces.

We talked nonstop. I only remember one part of the marathon conversation, which was when Darren returned from the park with our three boys. They looked hot and frazzled and ready to be home. I couldn’t believe the afternoon was gone.

Sisterchicks Do the Hula!

The words that sprang from my mouth were, “But we’re not done yet.”

Laurie started to cry sniffly little tears. An untrained ear might think Laurie was simply trying not to sneeze, but I knew she was crying. Laurie leaked and squeaked. I slushed and gushed. We knew this about each other.

“You’re right,” Laurie said. “You and I are not done yet, and I have a feeling we never will be.” She blinked quickly and tried to smile for Darren’s benefit.

Laurie stayed long enough for pizza. She promised to call me the next day from her hotel. We talked for two hours. I called her the next week. She called me the week after that. I called her the next and so on.

“Think of it this way,” I told Darren, when I showed him the phone bill a few months after Laurie and I reconnected our coast-to-coast friendship. “It’s cheaper than therapy.”

“What do you two talk about?” he asked.

“Everything.”

“Like what?”

I shrugged and listed topics Laurie and I had covered during the past week. “Varicose veins. New ways to fix chicken. The ozone layer. Coffee prices. Fabric softener. You know, life stuff.”

“But you don’t drink coffee.”

I looked at him and thought, *How come men don’t get this? It’s so basic.*

“Laurie and I need to stay connected. It keeps me sane when I talk to her every week.”

Robin Jones Gunn

“For eighty-seven minutes about chicken recipes and fabric softener?”

“If that’s how long it takes, yes. Sometimes we talk longer if we discuss our hair or our hormones.”

Darren left the room shaking his head.

The next time Laurie called, Darren answered the phone. He talked to her for a few minutes before Laurie put Gabe on so that our husbands could meet. The two men talked for almost five minutes, which surprised me.

That night, when Darren climbed into bed, I said, “What did you and Gabe talk about for so long?”

Darren looked at me with that smirk of his. “Oh, you know, the usual. Fabric softener. Hormones.”

I laughed so hard I got giggle tears all over my pillow. I was the happiest I’d been in a long time. I couldn’t explain where all the joy came from. I already had a great life with a wonderful husband and three healthy sons. But now I had Laurie again, and she was filling up a place in my life that had been empty for a long time.

Laurie and Gabe started coming to Connecticut every fall for a week to get away from the frazzled pace of their lives. They loved the New England autumn colors, and we loved seeing them. That became our annual get-together for six years in a row.

Then last August, Laurie called. “Gabe can’t manage a free week this fall for our New England getaway. I’m so disappointed.”

Sisterchicks Do the Hula!

"Oh," I moaned. "Are you sure? Not even for a quick weekend?"

"It doesn't look like it."

"I'm so sad, Laurie."

"I know. But I was thinking about taking a *Roman Holiday* instead."

"You want to go to Italy?"

"No, *Roman Holiday*, the movie. You know, with Audrey Hepburn. Remember how she played a princess who ran away for a few days to escape the pressures of royalty?"

"Are you saying you're tired of being rich and famous?"

"Gabe is the one who is rich and famous. I'm just the one who is tired. But not too tired to run away. Seriously, Hope, I need to get out of here. I'm going crazy. I'm busier than ever because I keep filling my calendar with stuff, but I'm not passionate about anything. I'm just trying to be productive. What I need is to get away and think things through. With all the girls out of the house now, I'm not sure who I am or what I'm supposed to be about."

"Getting away will help you figure that out?"

"I think so. I hope so. I can't focus on anything for very long here at home. I keep getting interrupted. That's why I'm ready to declare a Roman Holiday around here and run away for a few days."

"So, if you don't want to go to Italy and you both can't come here, where do you want to go?"

"Hawai'i."

Robin Jones Gunn

In a carefully guarded corner of my heart, the original tiki torch that had flickered faithfully for almost two decades spiked into a flame. I didn't let Laurie hear the blaze in my voice. "Hawai'i, huh?"

"Yes, Hawai'i. Don't you think it's about time the two of us got our little hula hips over to the islands?" Laurie's voice had definitely elevated. "Just the two of us, like we planned back in college. What do you think, Hope?"

"I think..." A gust of reality all but extinguished the flame. I was the one with the balloon payment coming up on our mortgage and three teenage sons headed for college. Nothing woven into the fabric of my DNA had ever allowed me to say yes to spending a large chunk of money on myself. "I think I'll have to think about it."

"I knew you'd say that. Don't say no too quickly. Run it past your honey when he's in a good mood, then call me back. Tell him you're being kidnapped by a runaway princess and you'll bring him back a case of macadamia nuts."

"Oh, yeah, that ought to win him right over."

"I'm serious about this, Hope. I really need something to look forward to. I need to go someplace where not one single person will ask me to do some favor for them because I supposedly have all this free time in my life now."

That afternoon I scuttled off to the video store like a dieter sneaking into the bakery aisle of the grocery store. I never took breaks during the day to watch TV or movies, but I rented *Roman Holiday* and watched it by myself. As the credits ran, I

Sisterchicks Do the Hula!

thought, *Laurie is right. She needs to do this. I need to do this. We need to go to Hawai'i.*

The next morning I called Laurie. "I have only one request. Could we rent scooters like Audrey Hepburn did and go darting about in the Honolulu traffic?"

"I take it you're warming up to the idea?"

"Warmed, toasted, broiled, and fried. I'm all for it, Laurie."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, very sure. I have all green lights on my end. Darren said we have enough frequent flyer points in his account to cash in for my round-trip airfare."

"So when do you want to go?"

"I had an idea about that, too. Why don't we go the end of January since our birthdays are only a few days apart? We'll both be turning forty, you know."

"As if you need to remind me."

"Don't you think it would be memorable to turn forty in Hawai'i?"

"Hope, you are a genius. Should I start checking into hotels?"

"I'm already ahead of you. Open your e-mail. I just sent you some options."

Before the day was over, we had booked our flights, selected our hotel room, and printed out a list of recommended restaurants in the greater Honolulu area. Twenty years earlier the plans required much more effort.

We e-mailed and called each other frequently over the next

Robin Jones Gunn

few weeks. Laurie made me laugh. Every time she called she sounded like a jubilant nine-year-old planning her own surprise birthday party. The guest list for this party was limited to just the two of us, but the potential activities included horseback riding on the beach, snorkeling, sailing, taking a sunset dinner cruise, parasailing, lots of fruity tropical beverages with little umbrellas, and a big luau. Laurie was determined to celebrate our entrance to midlife with pineapple pizzazz.

However, before our bags were packed, a little stowaway had quietly added her name to the guest list.