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LOOK WHO IS WATCHING GIRLFRIENDBOOKS



The journey of a thousand miles. »

Today we have a special guest blogger!

BY MARIA, ON AUGUST 22ND, 2011



Mara Purl, author of the short story *When Hummers Dream* has written for us today. You can download the Kindle version of her short story (a prequel to her upcoming novel) on Amazon **free** through Labor Day! For those without an e-reader, go to [BelleKeep Books](#) and use the password *BKBonus* to access it. Welcome Mara!

Hi Girlfriendbooks readers!

What is it that makes a girlfriend relationship so special? Looking back to when we actually were girls, I remember with great fondness everything from playing dolls with my best Kindergarten pal, to reading slightly naughty romance books with flashlights under the covers in the tween years, to tell-all confidences with only the closest one or two girlfriends during my twenties.

Somewhere in there the seeds must've been sewn for the now immeasurably precious relationships with my close women friends. For example, my best friend and I simply couldn't have made it through our divorces without the sanity-check conversations that steadied our seriously rocking boats. And there's a circle of about ten women with whom I'm tangibly aware of sharing the journey of my life.

We carve out time together when we can, making it a priority. Sometimes it's a phone conversation, sometimes a hike or a coffee, sometimes a flight and a visit of a few days. But these pals are never truly absent from my thoughts, even if months go by without the sight or the sound of them.

My career has taken me through many chapters, including acting on a soap opera, creating a radio drama that became a hit on the BBC, and now, writing novels. To be specific, I write the Milford-Haven Novels, a multi-character novel series set on California's Central Coast in the fictional town of Milford-Haven. In the prequel, a short story called *When Hummers Dream* that's free in the Kindle store through Labor Day, we meet the artist Miranda Jones, the series protagonist. *What the Heart Knows* is the first novel, due out in hardcover next month.

When I first started writing the series, I thought I was writing fiction. Imagine my fascination when I began to discover I'm writing *women's* fiction. What is that? Here's my theory so far. When I tell a story to my husband or to most of my male friends, there's come an inevitable moment when his eyes roll. Really, they do. And I know what he's thinking. "Yeah, yeah, get to the point!" (When I tell this story at my events, this gets a good laugh.) Okay but here's the thing. If I take his advice and tell a story *quickly* to a woman friend, she stops me. "Wait, wait, where are we?" she wants to know. "Give me the details."

This may seem abundantly obvious: women like details. But I think there's more to it. I think we actually *read* details like *code*. So, if I write about a woman wearing a DKNY soft wool cardigan and Stuart Weitzman wedge boots, my reader already knows a lot about that character: she's chic and trendy, lives in the city, spends some money on her clothes, but wants to be comfortable. Most male readers, though, would complain, "Why do I have to know what she's wearing?"

Through my writing, and through the comments I get from my readers, I have the delightful feeling that the more I write my novels, the more I'm *engaging* in a conversation with women friends. It's like a virtual version of an actual weekend my friends and I spent last year. To celebrate a birthday and a new publishing contract, I invited my close women pals to join me in Cambria, the real town upon which my fictitious one is loosely based. With the multiple personal and professional obligations we all have, it didn't seem realistic at first to imagine they'd come. Yet one after the next, they all responded, "yes." They came from as far away as Florida and Tokyo (!) and as close-by as Santa Barbara. We rented a huge house overlooking the ocean and shared rooms. We bought food and cooked. We hiked the trails, and prowled Main Street. We brought gifts and ceremoniously opened them. And we talked and talked and talked.

When the funny stories had been told and the dishes washed, we started really talking. What, in our heart-of-hearts, did we really want to do? Were we doing it? How could we find the time, the means, the way? In listening to them, I found new ways of listening to myself. And as we encouraged each to listen to ourselves, we found reconnection to core purpose and mission.

So on one level, *What the Heart Knows* is pure escapism. Get away from your own problems, travel up the virtual California coast and idyllic setting where characters have their own issues to resolve. On another level, it's a girlfriend getaway, a chance to feel valued and understood, a visit to your own personal haven. And guess what? You can go there any time you like.

About our Guest Blogger: Mara Purl is the small-town fiction queen, entertaining readers with her Milford-Haven novels since 1992. Mara's other writing credits include plays, screenplays, scripts for *Guiding Light*, cover stories for *Rolling Stone*, to name a few. Some of you may remember her as "Darla Cook" on *Days of Our Lives*. Mara is married and lives in Los Angeles and Colorado Springs. You can visit her at her website at www.marapurl.com.

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