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Susan Mallery

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The California sunshine's not quite so bright for three sisters who get dumped in the same week...

Finola, a popular LA morning show host, is famously upbeat until she's blindsided on live TV by news that her husband is sleeping with a young pop sensation who has set their affair to music. While avoiding the tabloids and pretending she's just fine, she's crumbling inside, desperate for him to come to his senses and for life to go back to normal.

Zennie's breakup is no big loss. Although the world insists she pair up, she'd rather be surfing. So agreeing to be the surrogate for her best friend is a no-brainer—after all, she has an available womb and no other attachments to worry about. Except...when everyone else, including her big sister, thinks she's making a huge mistake, being pregnant is a lot lonelier—and more complicated—than she imagined.

Never the tallest, thinnest or prettiest sister, Ali is used to being overlooked, but when her fiancé sends his disapproving brother to call off the wedding, it's a new low. And yet Daniel continues to turn up “for support,” making Ali wonder if maybe—for once—someone sees her in a way no one ever has.

But side by side by side, these sisters will start over and rebuild their lives with all the affection, charm and laugh-out-loud humor that is classic Susan Mallery.

California Girls Details

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From Reader Review California Girls for online ebook

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

Last week when I posted the Excerpt and Spotlight for this book, I said that I'd be reviewing it shortly. This is shortly. Probably also a bit longly, as I seldom write short reviews – and this isn't going to be one.

I can't do short for this because there are three separate stories packed into this lovely bit of Women's Fiction. (A term that is attempting to morph into "Relationship Fiction" but I digress.)

Like both of her previous standalone titles, *When We Found Home* and *Daughters of the Bride*, this is a story about family. Also like both of those awesome stories, this is a book about three siblings and their sometimes fraught relationship with their remaining parental unit.

This particular story kicks off when all three of the Corrado sisters get dumped on the same day. All the dumps are different, and not all of them are either tragic or even dramatic. But the ones that are really, really are.

Finola, a daytime talk show host in the cutthroat Los Angeles TV market, gets dumped just before showtime. Her husband waltzes in to tell her that he's leaving her just before she goes on air. Still shell-shocked, her first guest informs her that the woman Finola's husband has just dumped her for is her. That she's young, gorgeous and a country music sensation makes the story all that much more titillating to everyone who discovers it.

And said country music queen makes sure that EVERYONE does discover it. After all, she goes after married men on purpose because she likes the scandalous publicity – and seems to enjoy watching the dumped wife get even more dumped on by the voracious maws of both the media and public opinion.

Ali gets dumped less than two months before her wedding. By a douchebag who can't even manage to do the dumping in person so he sends his brother instead. Leaving Ali with both the ugly job of cancelling all of the wedding arrangements AND dumping her with all of the cancellation fees that result. She's also going to be homeless in the equally cutthroat LA housing market because she gave up her lease. After all, she was supposed to be moving in with the douchebag after the wedding.

Unlike Finola, Ali gets a knight in shining armor in the person of the douchebag's brother. A little help with the wedding cancellation turns into a solid friendship – and more.

Zennie's dumping is completely non-dramatic. Her relationship with Clark just isn't working out. Or, to use the sad but true cliché, she's just not that into him. But her non-dramatic breakup turns into something very dramatic indeed, as her newly uncommitted status lets her commit to something really, really big. She agrees to become a surrogate mother for her best friend.

The drama only increases when Zennie becomes pregnant with the first IVF treatment – and she discovers that nearly no-one in her circle of family and friends agrees with her decision AT ALL. Except for Clark, that guy she just wasn't that into. She may not have been into him as a potential romantic partner, but a solid and supportive friendship is an entirely different thing.

But it's not just Zennie's decision to be a surrogate that some people disapprove of. Their mother disagrees and disapproves, loudly, frequently and with some pretty damn awful cutting remarks, that she's unhappy with every single one of her daughters for not living their lives exactly the way she wants them to. And, ironically, for not giving her grandchildren. Yesterday.

We get to watch all of them "woman up" in the ways that work for them as they each (including mom!) discover what's important to them, and what they want and need to have the lives they've each dreamed of.

A life that includes their frequently dysfunctional, sometimes crazy, but generally loving, family.

Escape Rating B+: I enjoyed California Girls, but not quite as much as Daughters of the Bride, which I absolutely, totally adored. Consider that both a recommendation and a comment that if you loved this one you'll love that one too – and possibly more.

What makes this story is that their happy ever afters are all different, and that they all reach them in different ways. There might be an expectation that everyone ends up coupled at the end, but they don't.

And they shouldn't.

In many ways, Finola's story is the most interesting as well as the most cliched and least traditional – all at the same time. She begins the story thinking she has it all – the fantastic career and the successful, adoring and understanding husband. Only to discover that what she really has is a successful career that she adores, and a whole lot of other people in her life who have played second (or third or even lower numbered) fiddles to that career.

Being dumped makes her take a long, hard look at herself, who she is and what she really wants – after she takes a realistic but not too lengthy dive into victimhood. She deserves it, she is, after all, a victim of the media circus that disrupts what's left her life. It takes time for her to figure out that she isn't the victim in her actual breakup. It takes two to keep a marriage strong – and it takes two to weaken it. Owning her part of her situation makes her own up to her part in what went wrong as well.

Ali's story is the romance that readers will expect in the story – but it has its own twist. She is supposed to bounce back and find true love. She's just not supposed to find it with her ex's brother.

That she also finds herself as part of her journey is the icing on her particular cake.

Zennie's story is different from her sisters' – just not as different as I wanted it to be. At the beginning, she is happy being single as well as fairly resistant to society's (and her mother's) need to see her couple up with someone. Anyone. Her status as a happy single with a solid support network of friends has her mother convinced she must be a lesbian. She's not. She's just not interested in being half of a whole, and she hasn't discovered sex to be "all that" in any way at all.

I was kind of hoping that Zennie would turn out to be an Ace – an asexual. I think that would have made an interesting perspective to follow through in the story as she begins with an unusual perspective and I'd like to have seen it carried through. That's my 2 cents.

The storyline about Zennie becoming a surrogate felt well done, but also just not my cuppa. That being said, the reasons she did it worked well within the story. Her desire to help her friend and her willingness to put herself on the line for it were terrific. That pregnancy turned out to be a not exactly awesome experience was

real, as were her very mixed emotional reactions all the way down the line. That her friends and family were divided and frequently disapproving also felt real.

I also have mixed feelings about their mother's part of the story. On the one hand, it was absolutely terrific that she got her own second-chance at love with the movie star who once loved her and then dumped her. On the other hand, she was kind of a bitch to all of her daughters for much of the story. I wish her character had been more than two-dimensional.

That being said, a good time was still had by this reader with these California Girls. I look forward to the author's next standalone story as well as my next visit to Happily Inc.!

Jen says

One of the greatest joys of reading is the ability to escape to a different locale. In the midst of a cold Minnesota winter, escaping to California with sisters Finola, Zennie, and Ali was an absolute delight!
?? ????

Three sisters, all dealing with various dramas in their life. Morning show host Finola is blindsided on national TV when she finds out her husband has been having an affair. Zennie is content with her small life so her breakup is no big deal...until she's presented with the opportunity to be a surrogate for her best friend. And then there's poor Ali...her fiancée calls off her wedding a month before but refuses to do it himself and sends his brother to break up with her instead. These sisters deal with life changing events, leaning on each other and finding that maybe these endings are just new beginnings. I loved this story and was completely invested in the characters. This was wonderfully written and a fabulous representation of a sisterly bond. For me, California Girls was ????????/5 stars. Thank you @harlequinbooks for this advance reader in exchange for my honest review.

Taryn says

In this emotionally charged new read by author Susan Mallery we meet three sisters who all seem to be going through a difficult time, at the same time. Finola, the oldest, learns that her husband is cheating on her with a famous singer who happens to be a guest on her tv show the day she finds out. Zennie gets broken up with but for her she just wasn't into it anyway, she thinks that she is her best self alone and not in a relationship. She's happy with the way things are so when her best friend, who can't have children, asks her to not only be her surrogate but also the egg donor, she thinks no problem. Then there is Ali, the youngest of the three whose fiance dumps her a couple of months before their wedding. How does he do it you ask? He lets his brother tell her because otherwise he was just going to leave her standing at the alter alone and confused. Follow along in this emotional read as these three women all work through the happenings in their lives. Will Finola be able to get over the betrayal of her husband, will they end up back together or will she move on without him? Will having a baby for her best friend but in reality is really hers become an issue for Zennie or will she be selfless enough to give her friends the gift of a child? Can Ali learn to be a stronger person and stand up for herself or will she turn to food like she has in the past? This was a wonderful read that truly touched on the relationships between sisters and the one they have with their mother. I laughed throughout and I cried throughout and in the end I was happy with each road that the sisters took. It was a

fantastic read that shows the situations that a family can go through and how they deal with each problem. I look forward to seeing what Mallery brings to life next.

I received an ARC of this book, all thoughts and opinions are my own.

Lisa Schneider says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I used to be an avid reader of Susan Mallery a few years ago. She stopped being my instant buy about 16 books into the Fool's Gold series, just because I felt like they were getting monotonous. After reading this book, I am going to have to rethink my previous stand. I thoroughly enjoyed this book!

This novel is about three sisters: Finola, Zennie, and Ali. Three sisters have never been more different.

Finola is the oldest, most distinguished of the three sisters. She has a career in television and is the host of a t.v. show. She's married to the handsome, adoring Nigel.

Zennie is the middle child, the one who refuses to conform. She doesn't feel the need to pair up with another human being, but she's casually dating the adorable zoologist Clark. She is fiercely loyal and loving.

Ali is the baby sister, the one who was never a parental favorite. The one who feels overlooked and frumpy. She's self-deprecating, but not in a frustrating way. She is in the midst of planning her wedding to Glen.

One Friday, all three women are changed irrevocably. Finola finds out that the steady Nigel has been having an affair, with a younger ultra-famous singer. Ali's fiance calls off the wedding- by sending his brother to tell her! Clark breaks up with Zennie and she finds herself pregnant (She sacrifices her womb for her best friend.)

Yes- drama ensues, but the women make revelations about themselves. They realize the mistakes they have made in the past and they choose to grow from them. This was the type of novel I often crave. One that has just enough drama, and simple resolution.

I have always loved Susan Mallery's writing. She's a fantastic author, and it's fantastic for me to leave the world of Fool's Gold.

Heather~ Nature.books.and.coffee says

Thank you to the publisher for this copy in exchange for my honest review!

This was the first book I read by Susan Mallery and now I'm so glad I had the chance to, because I really enjoyed this book. It's about 3 sisters come together after, ironically, being dumped in the same week. I love how they came together to help each other overcome their heartbreaks! This book had lots of drama, and laughs! It made you mad for them at times. Such a fun chick lit book! I will definitely be reading more by Susan Mallery!!

Michele says

See the full review at HarlequinJunkie.com

Susan Mallery proved once again how on the mark her writing is with this relatable and funny yet poignant work of women's fiction. Filled with the complexities of family and personal relationships, *California Girls* explored issues that will resonate with every reader while it ultimately tugs at your heartstrings.

I'm always surprised when I read a new Susan Mallery book with how she keeps her characters so down to earth while putting them through their paces—and with how she manages to make them inherently likable. Even the characters I don't want to like. (I'm lookin' at you, Finola and Mary Jo!) *California Girls* took me on an emotional journey along with sisters Finola, Zennie and Ali, while they all recovered from a breakup. [Read More](#)

Susan says

California Girls

Susan Mallery

Holy cow, *CALIFORNIA GIRLS* is one crazy story! Three sisters all get dumped in the same week and to say they are devastated is a huge understatement! I have two sisters so I totally understood some of the feelings they had. Finola is a tv host for a morning show in Los Angeles. Zennie is a surgical nurse and Ali works for an auto parts warehouse. These three sisters couldn't be more different but they are about to find out just how strong their sister bond is. Their mother, Mary Jo has been after all three daughters to give her grand babies and needless to say, she isn't happy with the latest turn of events.

CALIFORNIA GIRLS is exactly why I love Susan Mallery's books. She had me sad on one page and giggling out loud on the next. This story is all about family and the past and the life lessons are heart tugging. It had me flipping through the pages like a woman on a mission. I had to know what was going to happen to these three sisters and all the secondary characters. *CALIFORNIA GIRLS* is a perfect story that will hold you hostage until the very last page. Once you start reading, it will be very hard to put down! You also won't be able to stop yourself from laughing at Daniel and the way he won't leave Ali alone!

In *CALIFORNIA GIRLS*, all of the characters are very interesting and believable, so much so that I felt as if I've known them for a long time. I would love to hang out with these sisters. I'm sure they could teach me a thing or two and I know they would keep my laughing all day long! I love how Susan Mallery does that to me each and every time. She has me longing to find friends just like her characters. There is so much heart in Susan's writing that I was left with a huge smile on my face and my heart very happy. Susan Mallery is the queen of writing heartfelt stories about sisters and family drama. If you are looking for a quick, funny, feel good story, you can't go wrong with *CALIFORNIA GIRLS*!

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Netgalley. Opinions expressed in this review are completely my own.

DJ Sakata says

Favorite Quotes:

Finola, we have models in the building. Tall, skinny, hungry models. They're starting to look feral and turn on each other. I'm convinced it's the smell of bacon.

... she alternated between trying to figure out a plan to win Nigel back and wondering if she could find a few anthrax spores to send him in the mail.

Finola told herself they weren't deliberately cruel, they were just young and thoughtless. At least she hoped they were because otherwise the next generation was going to be a disappointment.

My Review:

I fell into this irresistible story and didn't want to come back out. Susan Mallery has extraordinarily strong word voodoo. I was fully invested and right beside them or sitting in a corner watching as they bantered and argued. The storylines were deftly written and cleverly crafted with ample servings of levity and curiously addictive conundrums. Each character was uniquely compelling and so enticingly well drawn I could easily identify them in a police line-up. The mother was heinously shallow and possessed all the warmth and nurture of a rattlesnake and whose self-involvement was second only to her eldest daughter, Finola, who was a complete narcissist, although Finola had the wittiest quips of anyone. I adored Ali and Zennie, although my favorite character was the sweet and thoughtful Daniel and was totally besotted with him by the end of the book. Sigh, I want to clear off my TBR and only read Susan Mallery stories for the rest of my life.

Louise Bird says

Kudos to Susan Mallery!

This book is amazing, it is about three sisters who all have relationship breakups on the same day. The end for them is the beginning of self-discovery and finding out who they truly are.

It is a must read!

Kathryn says

3.5 stars. Review to follow.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

Easy breezy, a great escape read.

Aw, what a premise. Three sisters get dumped in the same week. Finola, Zennie, and Ali could not have worse luck!

That said, one of the many perks of sisterhood is having friendship and trust and being able to lean on each other, and that's just what these three do as they start over.

Finola is a host for a morning show when she finds out on live TV her husband is cheating on her with a much younger pop star. Regardless, Finola desperately wants her husband back if he'll take her.

Zennie feels differently about her breakup. She's fine surfing and having time to herself. She agrees to be a surrogate for her friend. But then she winds up pregnant and alone and wonders if she's made a mistake?

Ali is the wallflower sister. The other two garner attention, but not Ali. Her fiancé sends his brother to call off their wedding, and Ali thinks she's never been lower. But she has an admirer that keeps showing up...

California Girls is all about starting over. I loved these sisters even though at times they frustrated me with their choices. I felt the strong bond between the three women, and I loved how close they are with their mom as well. This book is well worth reading just to find out if all three get their happily ever after, especially Ali. My heart always went out to Ali.

Overall, California Girls is a fun, endearing story that warmed my heart and made me wish I had a sister.

I received a complimentary copy. All opinions are my own.

My reviews can also be found on my blog: www.jennifertarheelreader.com

Berit??? says

Sunshine, Sisters, and second chances!

A fabulous story filled with fun and drama. Susan Mallery has crafted a brilliant story that will make you laugh, cry, and want to throw things! Three very different sisters faced with some major life choices, but side by side they can get through anything! Whenever I read a book about sisters I always get a little jealous, it is a relationship that I myself don't have, but I can still experience it through books.

This book begins with one bad weekend, all three of the sisters get dumped. Finola hosts a television morning show. Her husband informs her right before she's about to go on air that he is having an affair, now that's some timing right? What a great guy! Ali is consumed with planning her wedding that is until her fiancé's brother shows up to let her know that her fiancé is too much of a wuss to tell her he's calling off the wedding. Another great guy! Zennie Who is pretty content being single is dumped by a guy she just recently started dating. His reason? He realizes that she's not all that into him and she isn't really looking for a relationship. OK fair enough, he actually might be a good guy. After this weekend the sisters are left to pick

up the pieces of their lives and are also face with some unusual unique and life altering choices.

The story was told with charm and heart, and I really loved the humor sprinkled throughout. The serious subject matter of infidelity and surrogacy was handled with a compassionate yet realistic hand. The sisters were all very likable, very relatable, and at times very frustrating. I loved the sister bond as well as the relationship the girls had with their mother. Ali was probably my favorite sister and I was so invested in her happily ever after. I am a sucker for a good second chance story and this one was fab! Definitely recommend!

??? Tanya Ebi, did a wonderful job with the narration she gave each sister their own unique voice. She also did a really good male voice, seriously there were times I forgot it was a woman speaking. Another fabulous audiobook experience!

??? Song Running Through My Head

Greetings loved ones

Let's take a journey

I know a place

Where the grass is really greener

Warm, wet n' wild

There must be something in the water

Sippin' gin and juice

Laying underneath the palm trees

(Undone)

The boys

Break their necks

Try'na to creep a little sneak peek

(At us)

You could travel the world

But nothing comes close

To the golden coast

Once you party with us

You'll be falling in love

Ooh oh ooh oh oh ooh

California girls

We're unforgettable

Daisy dukes

Bikinis on top

Sun-kissed skin

So hot

We'll melt your popsicle

Ooh oh ooh

Ooh oh ooh

California girls

We're undeniable

Fine, fresh, fierce

We got it on lock

West coast represent

Now put your hands up... <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=F57P9C4...>

*** many thanks to Harlequin Books and Harper Audio for my copies of this book ***

Chris Conley says

No one, absolutely no one, writes stories about sisters as well as Susan Mallery. All of her books are wonderful but she has a special magic when the story involves the dynamics of the sister relationship. Everyone in this book, except for Glen, is a wonderful personality. I love her books.

Jessica says

I received this book for free from TLC Book Tours as part of a review tour.

This was my first time reading a book by Susan Mallery and I enjoyed it.

This book was a classic chick lit novel.

I loved the dynamic between the sisters. That felt very real and organic. The sisters did have their differences but were still able to come together when it mattered.

I also loved how each of their stories were different. Even though they all had the commonality of getting dumped at the same time, they all went down different paths. I thought that was really important to show because everyone is different and deals with things in their own way.

The one thing I didn't like was how some of the situations that the characters found themselves in weren't that realistic. For example, the way Finola found out about her husband's affair (her husband told her right before she went on air, plus the mistress was the pop star she had to interview, who also confronted her about the affair). But this is a chick lit novel so I can look past that. Part of the fun of reading chick lit is the over the top scenarios that happen.

Overall, this was a solid chick lit book perfect for reading while sunbathing in the warm California sun.

Andrea says

Starting over isn't easy, even when it's the right thing to do.

This is Susan Mallery doing what she does best: combining romance and chick lit with all the feelings and lessons about love, loss, heartbreak, moving on, and learning and ultimately coming out of the worst moments of your life a stronger person.

This book tells the story of three sisters, who couldn't be more different, all experiencing a painful breakup at the same time, each of them learning a different lesson: Ali's fiancé doesn't even have the guts to break off their engagement weeks before the wedding and sends his brother to do his dirty work instead, Zennie is

shocked when she has literally no feelings about her boyfriend breaking up with her and throws herself into a very new, non-romantic situation, and Finola's husband informs her, minutes before she has to be on live TV, that he has been having an affair and is leaving her. While they all learn different things about themselves during the painful months that follow, they realize they have all lost sight of what is truly important, and grow stronger.

I loved watching the sisters realize uncomfortable truths and growing because of that, how they each learned to let things go and ultimately found themselves again. It was a lovely story about three totally different women, each remarkable in their own way, and I cheered so hard when they all stood up for what they wanted! I can't believe it took me this long to pick up a Susan Mallery book again. I forgot how warm, heartfelt, and amazing her books are!

Definitely recommended to anyone who likes complex stories about families, loss, and moving on!

I received an ARC from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review
