



The Laws of Harmony

Judi Hendricks

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Sunny Cooper has been running since she was eighteen—from the New Mexican commune where she grew up . . . and from the haunting memory of the freak accident that took the life of her younger sister. Now, at thirty-two, Sunny voices radio spots in Albuquerque while struggling to hold on to a floundering relationship. But when a second tragic accident—and the devastating truths that come to light in its aftermath—turns her world upside down, Sunny runs again.

In the town of Harmony on San Miguel Island, she takes a new job, learns to ride a motorcycle, and makes some surprising new friends. But the past is never far behind. A startling discovery—along with an emotional and revelatory reunion with her estranged mother—is forcing Sunny to step out from the shadows of yesterday to embrace an uncertain future.

The Laws of Harmony Details

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From Reader Review The Laws of Harmony for online ebook

Tiffany Hawk says

This is the kind of book that makes me hate my Nook. After I finished the e-book, I thought it was so good that I had to buy the paper copy, a habit I can't afford to keep up! Hendricks is my favorite kind of writer – she effortlessly combines the humorous and the, well I wouldn't use the word dark, but the serious anyway. I truly loved following Sunny, the protagonist, as she pieced her life back together with no small amount of sass. I particularly liked that the characters' growth was relatively subtle and organic and that they changed without losing any part of themselves. (I'm intentionally being vague so I don't spoil anything.) Go read the first chapter online and just try not to get sucked in.

Pamela Pickering says

For the most part I really enjoyed this book. Being from NM, I really enjoyed the NM references, especially being away from home is was like a nice little visit back to the state for me. Quite frankly, I wouldn't mind living on the NWestern island Sunny ends up on either. Hendricks' writing style is easy to read and follow. The book was rating a possible 4 stars for me but after a while I got a little weary of her reminiscing, although I still see where it was valuable to understand Sunny's character. Unfortunately, I think the background to Sunny's character eccentricities came a little too late in the book. By that time, I was getting annoyed and frustrated with her. If the events of Sunny's childhood had come out earlier in the book, I probably wouldn't have felt that annoyance. Also, I doubt if I would have resorted to skimming to many of her reminiscences in the end. Despite that, I would still recommend this as a good beach read and look forward to a sequel. I think the author set the story up nicely for one.

Robin says

I have loved this author's books and am thrilled to get an advance reading copy of this. The book is due out in January. If you haven't read this author, try BREAD ALONE, a terrific relationship story set in a Seattle bakery.

Ariela says

Sunny Cooper is a middle aged woman who does voice-over work and lives with her boyfriend, Michael, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her relationship with Michael has been strained since she refused to marry him, but though they're unhappy at least they have each other. Then Michael is killed in a mysterious auto accident and strangers start showing up at Sunny's door, claiming that Michael was involved in a business scheme that cheated them out of money. Reeling with grief and unsure how to respond to these accusations, Sunny heads back to the New Mexico commune where she was raised. There she soon butts heads with her hippy mother and flees once again, ending up on San Miguel island in a little town called Harmony. Here she learns to live again and begins building friendships in unexpected places.

The title of this book comes from the townspeople of Harmony, who like to share “laws” with Sunny in an effort to help her adjust to her new home. Law # 1: Harmony is a town that’s hard to get to, even harder to leave, and everyone stays longer than they plan to. Law #2: When you need something, you just have to ask. The residents of Harmony are a mixed cast of warm and eccentric characters with an overbearing landlord and drunken fishmonger thrown in for good measure. Sunny has a hard time fitting in with the townspeople’s laid back, optimistic attitude, having spent the first eighteen years of her life on a commune surrounded by an ever-changing group of people. “Group work, group play, group meals... group sex, on occasion,” she tells one person, “Even our outhouse was a five-seater... It made me into the kind of person who thinks three people is a mob.” Little by little though, Sunny finds herself in Harmony.

“The Laws of Harmony” isn’t the sort of book I usually read and perhaps it’s for the reason I had a difficult time getting into the story. I loved Sunny, but at times there was so much going on that it was tough to keep track of what was a flashback and what was taking place in the present, who was a significant character and who wasn’t. That being said, Hendricks has a marvelous way with words. Sunny is the sort of woman who enjoys her food and cooks as a form of therapy, When she’s sad she stands “at the sink absently picking pieces of cold pasta out of a congealed Alfredo sauce and washing them down with room temperature white wine,” when she’s hopeful she works with pie dough, spreading sugared nuts over it, slashing steam vents in the top crust and brushing the whole thing with egg wash. Hendricks has an intuitive understanding of the connection between food and emotion, a talent that helped me connect with Sunny and often left my mouth watering.

Hendricks also has a knack for describing characters in a way that makes you see deeper into their nature For instance, she described the elusive Michael as a man “with an aura about him – daring, adventurous, carefree, almost joyful – but with darkness just under the surface. Like you could scratch him with your fingernail and fight something you might not really want to see.” For descriptions like this, I’ll definitely be checking out Hendricks’ other books.

Yolanda says

I really enjoyed this book .It was the first one I have read by this author and I love the way she incorporates food into the story seamlessly. I also feel that she creates her characters in such a way that you really like them even with all their flaws.

I also feel that she has a gift for crafting setting. the first part of the book takes place in the Southwest and the other part in the Northwest and in her descriptions of both places she captures them so well.

I want to try to make her prize winning brownies in the story.

This one I am sending along to Pamela and then on to Qult Granny if she would like.

I thank the publisher for letting me have an ARC of this book . I truly enjoyed it.

Heidi says

As a fan of Judith R Hendricks, I immediately loved *The Laws of Harmony*. However, as it ended, I felt deflated, sad that I couldn't continue on the character's journey... and that made think about the story itself and I discovered that there were a **lot** of unfinished aspects to this book. Is it just me, or isn't that out of character of the author?

The Laws of Harmony is ultimately a story about reconciliation between a woman and her avant-garde mother. But there are major underlying themes throughout the book that could be their own stories entirely. The death of a fiancé, the betrayal of a best friend, a continental move, the hesitant reformation of friendships, a possible romance, etc. etc, etc.... What we get are flashbacks of a repressed childhood (though these snippets are beautifully told, IMO. I just wish it were **THAT** easy to come to terms with all the baggage in life.), a surprise and then a bigger surprise, and a too-shortly concluded *The End*. Will this keep me from reading more of Hendricks? The answer is a defiant "NO!" I felt that she decided the plot of *The Laws of Harmony* as she wrote, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. It gave the story flavor...

...and speaking of flavor... as a native of New Mexico myself, I could literally **TASTE** the food in the book. I love this about Hendricks' work. I salivated so much that I found myself reading at my local Mexican restaurant - pining for homegrown chilies. Waaaahhhh!

****EDIT**** After reviewing the other three JRH books, I've decided that Sunny (the main character in *The Laws of Harmony*) is by far my favorite character. And I love her mother even more! So... I'm giving this book another star based on that alone.

Bonnie says

This is the story of Sunny Cooper who grew up in New Mexico on a commune. Her life was affected in many ways as she grew up in this environment both in positive and negative ways. A tragic event made a great impact on her life and as a reader you learn what this event is as Sunny confronts and faces this as an adult. As an adult, in her 30's, she is living in Albuquerque, and finds herself in a relationship with Michael and a best friend Betsy who both betray her in many different ways. Sunny makes a choice to pick up and start over somewhere else and ends up in the town of Harmony on San Miguel Island. She ends up with a new job, makes some wonderful new friends and even learns to ride a motorcycle. She learns she must confront her past to move forward and has an unexpected reunion with her estranged mother.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *The Laws of Harmony*. I liked seeing how Sunny changes and grows as a character and reading about the details of her life growing up on a commune was very interesting. My favorite part of the book was Sunny's life in Harmony which sounds like a charming town with wonderful characters. Sunny made many friends that appear to be true and strong friends that truly care about her. Her mother, Gwen, is another interesting character and I liked how Ms. Hendricks explained why she chose to live her life and raise her family on a commune. It was very fascinating to read about this lifestyle and how it affected the whole family in many positive and negative ways. As a reader, it made me think about what a "normal" family is and that there really is not a "normal". It is different for everyone based on our experiences and what our family of origin and environment is like. I believe that it is what we make of those experiences that effect us as adults and how we choose to learn from them.

Read more of my review on my blog [HERE](#).

Maria says

I had read Judi's 'Bread Alone' series and loved it therefore, I was looking forward to reading more of her work. I found that from the start, this book was quite vague in describing the events that Soleil, or Sunny as

she liked to be called, had gone through, or was going through in the present-day. The death of her sister, Mari, is only mentioned at times, with hardly any attention to how it had affected her in the present time. I also didn't like to hear about Sunny's life on the commune, it seemed mundane, and had no attachment to the present-day plot. Also, I wasn't too keen on the storyline with Michael and his debts, I found that it caused too much confusion, and also couldn't keep me entertained with the plot. When Sunny moved to Harmony, I would have hoped for her to form a bond with one or two of the residents there. However, I felt that each chapter found Sunny with someone new, not giving us the chance to see any depth in the friendships that she made. I also found that when Sunny met JT, there was absolutely no chemistry there, the story fell flat whenever he came into the picture. The ending was just awful, with no foreseeable future as to what happened to Sunny. Definitely not one of Judi's best works; hoping that her other books will be just as good as 'Bread Alone'.

Shanyn says

I didn't want this book to end.

Julie Mendel says

A tale of a free spirited upbringing in a commune which Sunny leaves as soon as she is able. She believes she is happy and that her life is good and then things begin to spin out of control, her finance is killed in an automobile accident, after burying his charred remains Sunny discovers he had been having an affair, with her best friend, that he was a gambler who was deeply in debt and that he cheated investors out of thousands of dollars by laundering money through his start-up companies. Sunny sells everything she owns and essentially runs away from it all...just like she did the commune. Throughout her journey she makes many changes to her life ranging from her new job to learning to ride a motorcycle and accepting help from others. There are many other twists and turns that include reuniting with her estranged mother to help her figure out her past has impacted her present and where the future is leading.

This was a great story of love, family, relationships with a healthy dose of life tossed in.

Patricia Geller says

Really enjoyed this book. Read it in two days.

Trina says

A patient at my work recommended this book to me. She had lots of good things to say- Said she writes like Barbara Kingsolver and you know I luv me some Barbara so I'm givin it a go.

This was a nice cozy read. She writes in a way that is easy and... comfortable. So easy to just get absorbed in a well told story; although I really didn't see a Kingsolver resemblance. Maybe because the main character is a strong independent woman??

The format was fresh- It had a strong mystery theme but somehow that came off secondary to the character's attempt to reconstruct her life in a new place. There were a few unexpected twists... It definitely was not predictable which I liked a lot. Also it was set on an island in the Pacific North West which is close to my heart.

I liked this one a lot and am looking forward to reading some of her other books

Molly Ringle says

As always, Judi Hendricks excels at evoking setting and mood with sensory details--food, plants, landscape, music, humble dwellings. Both sun-baked New Mexico and the moss-drenched Puget Sound island seemed totally real and were thus lovely to read about. Though I zipped along through the book with interest to see what happened with many of the various twists and turns, I felt ultimately a bit frustrated by the ending. I guess I'm more of a romance-novel fan after all, and had higher hopes for some of the men in her life, but they largely turned out unreliable and problematic. Realistic, perhaps--and perhaps what makes it a work of "women's fiction" instead of romance. For the lovely writing and the occasional bursts of humor, though, I'll be happy to keep reading Hendricks in future.

MaryAnn says

When I got to the last page I said to myself "This a great book." It is a truly human story and it gave me some major insights into my own life. I can't wait to go back through it and underline some key quotes and lines. I love a book that reminds me that life is good and that I am good too even if both of us have our flaws, ups and downs and unresolved issues.

Marleen says

Judi Hendricks is an author I discovered only recently. I must say I do love her writing style and the depth she brings to her characters. I enjoyed the story of Sunny (birth name "Soleil") who was born on a New Mexico commune and lived there with her parents and brother and little sister. Sunny never took to commune life and she decides to go college in Albuquerque, cutting most of her ties with her family for long periods of time.

Sunny's story is rather captivating especially her flash backs to life in the commune, where little sister Mari lost her life in a stupid accident, a loss that has marked Sunny and her entire family forever in a very painful way.

In the present time, at the age of 31, Sunny discovers that the man she has lived with for the past three years is not the man she thought he was (no spoilers, but it's good!), and so she decides to leave Albuquerque, and tries to put as much distance between herself and her recent past. She lands on the Island of San Miguel, in the town of Harmony; so different from what she has known so far and tries to make sense of all what has happened, not only recently, but also during her childhood and adolescence on the commune.

This is a compelling read that teaches the strength of reconciliation, and growing up and of knowing where you belong. Nothing is ever black and white. There were so many elements (nature, family, food, friends, ...) that make this read work for me. Love the story telling abilities of this author.

