



## With Joni Page Author of **The Feminist EarthMother PartyGirl**

### **How did you come up with the title, *The Feminist EarthMother PartyGirl*?**

If you sat down and asked a person to describe themselves, they'd probably say something that described what they did rather than who they are. "I'm a dad", "I'm a teacher", "I'm a volunteer". But I believe knowing who we are is very important.

So I set out to explore a person who had lost their sense of self and was determined to regain it. A book's title really sets its course, so I deliberately chose three descriptors that were as far apart as I could unreasonably get! The story had to move along at a cracking pace to cover everything it needed to, whilst still allowing enough time to dawdle over the big questions. And fun. There had to be plenty of fun. In the end I believe the book lived up to the promise of its amusing title.

### **What makes the main character Candice Kelly question her life?**

Candice is happy with her life until she does a personality test on a professional development day at work. It comes out so completely unlike how she sees herself that she wonders who she is and where she's heading. But the storylines are massively deep, with a range of supporting characters who are all looking for Better in their life, too, which provides a nice measuring stick for her to consider her journey. Her community is one of the best parts of the book, and they just ran onto the page as if they'd always been there, waiting for me to write about them.

### **Why is Candice's community so interesting?**

They all have their own crazy stories. Her parents got together after a one-night stand, and her brothers are both called Harry. Her best friend Kat, wow, she was a revelation! Then there's her neighbours who live either side of her flat, and her work colleagues, and more. She also inadvertently goes on a date with someone who's not her boyfriend. It's bedlam!

### **Is your book a romance?**

It has romance in it but so much more.

Women are often portrayed in books and movies and sitcoms as mainly seeking love rather than reaching for other life goals too. Of course it's important to have love in our life, but *The Feminist EarthMother PartyGirl* happily explores the richness of all the different relationships in our lives - our lovers, friendships, family, colleagues and also our relationships with our Self. There's a lot of natural humour and pathos in our regular lives.

### **Are relationships a major theme in the book?**

My writing focuses a lot on relationships because they underpin everything. The biggest theme is, of course, about Candice's relationship with herself, but her quirky family have a huge influence on how she thinks about her life as well.

Friendships also form a big focus of the book. Candice has great neighbours and colleagues, but it is her friendship with her best friend Kat, who features in the little prequel chapter available on my website, that forms a crucial part of who she is. Kat is an extraordinary character who really could have had her own book, except that she only came about because I was writing the book about Candice. Although they are so different, their lives run in parallel, and I loved writing about their friendship.

In addition, Candice examines the place of romantic love in her life throughout the book. She's had many failures, and she wonders how important it is in the scheme of her other life ambitions. *The Feminist EarthMother PartyGirl* covers it all really.



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### **Is Candice your favourite character in this book?**

I love them all! They all have bruises, but each one is doing the best they can. My characters are like my invisible friends. I want to see them happy just as I do my real friends.

### **Why did you think this was a story that needed telling?**

Candice and her story came out of my own experiences. When I was 28, I felt like I needed to be more serious and grown up. I made some of my worst mistakes after that! Approaching a new decade is prime time for examining our lives, and I wanted to write somebody having a better journey than I did. Candice is a great example of how we can adjust the direction of our life. She's quite formidable, but she doesn't feel that way about herself in the beginning.

### **Did you know the final outcome when you started the book?**

The story basically wrote itself, and the characters in Candice's hilarious community just tumbled onto the page. It was so wonderful when they appeared in my head. I laughed a lot. I cried a little. The focus of the book is that we're in charge of our own destiny, and Candice learns so much by observing how others approach their lives. Candice is funny and feisty and loving and pragmatic and she roars through her confusion. It's really entertaining to see how she gets clear about who she is and what she wants.

### **Was it an easy book to write?**

No! It was my third attempt. The book started out as a self-help book called How to Be a Feminist Earth Mother Party Girl but really, who can go past a great story instead? So I decided to write a novel, and create a character my readers could identify with, rather than tell them what to do. After a disappointing attempt to write it as a school-leaver's journal, I had a few hours to kill in a library, and Candice Kelly came out of nowhere. The more I wrote her story, the more intrigued I was by this woman who was questioning everything about her life and the lives of those around her.

### **You've been published in an award-winning book?**

I was proud to be part of the anthology *The Sound of Silence: Journeys Through Miscarriage*, published by Mostly for Mothers. It won the ACT Writing and Publishing Award for Nonfiction, and the Canberra Critics Circle Award for Literature. I was very grateful to be part of that, and it kind of completed a full circle. We'd had two miscarriages, and my husband and I decided to pull out all stops to get pregnant and stay pregnant, which resulted in me taking a year off study and work. I had to have something quiet to do, and that something was writing. Writing for that anthology was like closing the loop that started with the decision to take a year off. We were lucky enough to have a family, and a whole heap of books written. Bad things can lead to good outcomes, which is one of the themes of *The Feminist EarthMother PartyGirl*.

### **What are your other books about?**

I have two very different series already mostly written. The three books in this series are all stand-alone stories. Instead of following a character, they explore different women at the crossroads of their lives, Candice in this book at 28, then another at 38, and another at 48. My other series is about a friendship group and how they face up to a crossroad of life challenges together. I like the thought we can always get up and dust ourselves off and get on with life. I also have a compendium of short stories, and a cookbook and some helpful non-fiction. All of my books are about making our lives better.

### **How do people buy your book?**

It's available at Dillons at Norwood and Dymocks in Adelaide, Glenelg and Hyde Park or you can go to my website [jonipage.com](http://jonipage.com). The ebook is available through Kobo.