



Three Broken Promises: A Novel (One Week Girlfriend Quartet Book 3)

By Monica Murphy

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Breakout sensation Monica Murphy returns with a hot new contemporary romance—a heartfelt story of second chances, forgiveness, and redemption.

Commitment. That’s what I really want from Colin. Ever since my brother, Danny, died in Iraq, Colin’s done so much to help me, including giving me a job at his popular restaurant so I can leave my crappy waitressing job at the strip joint. But lying in bed with him every night to comfort him from his horrible nightmares isn’t enough anymore. I know he feels guilty about Danny’s death, about not going to Iraq, but I can’t keep living this double life.

I love him desperately, but he’s got so many demons, and if he can’t open up to me now, then he’ll never be the real partner I need him to be. I gave him a month, and now I’m out of here. If he truly loves me like he says, he knows where to find me.

Praise for *Three Broken Promises*

“The heat between these two is explosive. . . . It is the emotion and the shared tragedy between Jen and Colin . . . that takes this book to another level.”—*Heroes and Heartbreakers*

“Filled with emotion, drama, red-hot sex, intensity, and a love that may as well have been written in the stars, *Three Broken Promises* is another must read from Monica Murphy.”—*Holly’s Hot Reads*

“*Three Broken Promises* is an absolutely out-of-this-world perfect romantic story that swept me off my feet. Once again, I fell in love with Murphy’s easy style of writing, great sense of humor and ideal characters. . . . I felt glued to the pages and there wasn’t a single thing that could make me stop reading.”—*Smokin Hot Book Blog*

“I fell in love with this series the moment I opened *One Week Girlfriend* and *Three Broken Promises* didn’t disappoint. . . . I can say without a doubt that I

enjoyed every minute of this book.”—*Book Blogger Paradise*

“Murphy has done it again. . . . This story will make you smile, it will warm your heart and soul, and it may even have you pulling your hair out as these two amazing people navigate the rollercoaster that is love. I loved everything about it.”—*Roxy’s Reviews*

“Such a delicious book . . . Monica’s writing is addictive as always, and I’m really looking forward to the next book.”—*City of Books*

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Monica Murphy is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *One Week Girlfriend*, *Second Chance Boyfriend*, *Three Broken Promises*, *Four Years Later*, and the eBook novella *Drew + Fable Forever*. A native Californian, she lives in the foothills of Yosemite with her husband and three children.

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Chapter 1

Jen

“So why a butterfly?”

I lean forward, my boobs smashed against the back of the chair. I've been sitting here for what feels like hours, a needle pressing relentlessly into the sensitive skin on the back of my neck. The needle's buzz fills my head, drowning out all the chaotic noise that usually occupies it.

I much prefer that incessant buzz. Easier to deal with compared to the endless stream of questions and worries that run through my brain.

“Yo, earth to Jen.” Fable waves her hand in front of my face, then snaps her fingers twice. Brat. I wish I could smack her but I'm too busy gripping my knees, bare-knuckling them like a little wimp.

“What?” I grit out from between clenched teeth, wincing when the needle sketches over a particularly sensitive part.

Oh, who am I kidding? All the parts are sensitive. Time to face facts. I’m a complete weenie. I thought getting a tattoo would be a cinch. I’ve dealt with a lot of emotional pain in my life, but not too much physical. What’s an hour or so sitting in a chair under a needle?

Apparently, it’s pretty shitastic, considering how much it hurts, and how much I have to gird my loins to get through it all.

Gird my loins—something silly my mom used to say. Back when she was happy and carefree and our family was whole.

Now we’re broken and distant. I don’t talk to my father. Mom calls only when she’s crying and drunk.

It sucks. That’s why I had to get away from my family. I have other reasons for wanting to escape this place now.

“I want to know why you chose a butterfly for your tattoo. What’s the meaning behind it?” Fable asks, sounding beyond irritated with me though she’s smiling, so I know she’s not. She came with me downtown to Tattoo Voodoo, the little shop she recommended for us to get our tattoos.

She got one, too, but she’s already finished, considering it was only a line written in elegant, simple script. A surprise tattoo for her boyfriend, fiancé, or whatever you want to call him, though considering they can’t keep their hands off each other for too long, I’m guessing he’ll discover his “surprise” sooner rather than later. Drew Callahan is so madly in love with her, it’s sort of disgusting.

But it’s also cute. Super, super cute, especially since it’s a line from one of the poems he wrote for her. How they make Fable swoon, and nothing makes that girl swoon. She’s pretty hardcore. She’s had to be, what with the things life has dealt her.

I could take a lesson or two from her. I’m too soft. I let people in.

And then they stomp all over me. Or worse, ignore me completely.

“Freedom,” I finally tell her, exhaling loudly when the buzzing stops and I feel the washcloth brush across my freshly tattooed skin. “I’m ready to break free of this stifling cocoon called my life and find my own way, instead of relying on someone else. A butterfly’s a perfect representative of that, don’t you think?”

I can practically taste it. Freedom. I’ve always relied too heavily on others. My friends. My family. My brother especially, not that I can anymore considering he’s been gone for a while now. I might have run away that one time and tried to make it on my own, but I failed.

Spectacularly.

Not this time around, though. I’ve thought things through. I’ve saved money. This time, I have a plan.

Sort of.

“You really believe leaving is the best thing for you?” Fable asks, her voice incredulous, her expression . . . sad. She’s my closest friend, the first real friend I’ve made since I fled my old life. But even she doesn’t know everything. She’d never look at me the same if she knew. “Do you want to leave because of what happened to you before?”

Nodding, I wince when the tattoo artist—Dave—wipes the washrag across my skin yet again. “Finished,” he says matter-of-factly.

“Yeah, I can’t deny that my past comes into play.” I’d told Fable what happened for the most part when I worked at Gold Diggers, that sleazy strip club on the outskirts of town. My family doesn’t know, and I swore Colin to secrecy. The public story is that I was a cocktail waitress. The private story is that I stripped.

The secret, no-one-else-can-know story is one I can hardly think about, let alone admit.

“We all have a past,” Fable points out. She has a pretty bad one, not that anyone calls her on it. Drew won’t allow it.

“I know. I just . . . I can’t stay here forever. Even though you want me to,” I murmur, sending a pleading look in Fable’s direction. I don’t want the lecture again, especially in front of our new friend Dave. I don’t think I can stand it. I know she means well, but the words she says halfway convince me I need to stay every single time I hear them.

“I’m not the only one who wants you here,” Fable points out, brows raised, a knowing look on her face.

Her statement doesn’t need an answer. I know who she’s referring to. He’d want me to stay indefinitely, but I haven’t even told him I’m leaving yet. I’ll let him know tonight.

Hopefully.

He provides the place I live, my job. He does it all with no strings attached, or so he claims. Really, I believe him. A deep, dark secret part of me wishes there were strings. Plenty of strings that tie me to him, bind us together until we’re so connected that we’d become one long word. Not just Jen. Not just Colin.

JenandColin.

No way is that gonna happen.

So if I can’t have him—and really, I shouldn’t want him, or have allowed myself to become completely dependent on him for far too long—then I’m going to claim my freedom completely.

Stupid and risky and totally freakin’ scary, but . . . I need to do it. Recent events have pushed me into doing it. My past has come calling in the form of a customer at The District just a few nights ago. He came into the bar and ordered a drink. Thankfully, I was able to avoid him and he left without incident.

This could happen again, though. Having the man there was a reminder that I can never escape my past. I don’t want Colin to know what I’ve done. He won’t like me anymore. He’ll look differently at me.

I don’t think I could stand that.

Desperately needing to change the subject, I ask, “How does it look?”

Fable tilts her head, examining the tattoo on the back of my neck. “It’s beautiful. But you’ll never really see it.”

“There’s such a thing as mirrors, you know.” I take the very one Dave is handing to me and I look into it, see my reflection bouncing off the mirror that lines the entire wall. My long hair is piled on top of my head in a sloppy bun, revealing my neck, the reddened skin, and the butterfly.

It’s a delicate sketch in gentle shades of blue and black, looking as if it could somehow flutter its wings and fly right off my skin. If I like it this much now, imagine how awesome it’ll look when the skin is healed.

“I love it,” I breathe as I hand the mirror back to Dave, who sets it on the counter beside him.

“It’s pretty,” Fable agrees with a smile on her face. “I’m proud of you, Jen. I know you were scared to come here.”

More like petrified, but now I’m proud, too. I did it. I got a tattoo and I didn’t cry or run out of the shop before big, burly Dave got his needle on me, which I was afraid I might do. Kind of stupid, to be proud of something as simple as this. If my mom ever sees it, she’ll flip out. My dad will think I’m a common gutter tramp—his words, not mine. Not that I plan on seeing them anytime soon. I don’t want to go back, and they’re not exactly welcoming me. I think they’re almost glad to be rid of me. I was a burden.

I have a feeling Colin won’t really like my tattoo either. But I didn’t get it for anyone else. Just me.

Dave’s now placing a bandage on my fresh tattoo, rattling off the care instructions in a monotone, as if he’s said this before a million times, which he probably has. He hands me a sheet of paper with the instructions listed on it and I glance it over, not really seeing the words. My brain is too occupied with these people in my life who I wish I could please but rarely do.

They haunt me, hang out in my head like ghosts I can’t get rid of. Even Colin makes an appearance there, which is dumb considering I live with the man.

Fable’s cell rings, and from the smile that pops onto her face when she glances at her phone, I know it’s Drew. I watch her step away to talk to him privately and jealousy clutches at my heart, making it hurt.

I want that, though I’d never admit it out loud, and certainly not to Fable. Unconditional love, a man who would do anything—and I mean anything—to ensure I’m happy. Safe. Secure. Loved.

If I’m being honest with myself, I’d like to have that with Colin.

He acts like he wants more, but then he always pulls back. I’ve shared more intimate moments with him than with anyone else in my entire life. I’ve slept in his bed. He’s held me close. He’s kissed me . . . but nothing beyond the sort of kiss a brother bestows on his sister’s cheek or forehead.

Confirmation that’s the only way he’ll ever think of me. We grew up together, Colin and I. Well, Danny, Colin, and I. My brother and Colin were best friends. They were supposed to join the Marines together, but somehow Danny was the only one who ended up going into the service. Then he went to Iraq.

And never came back.

He's the ghost who hangs in my head the most, though he doesn't judge or make me feel bad. Not necessarily. It's more like my big brother reminds me that sometimes, the choices I make aren't always the best ones. If he knew everything, he never would have forgiven me.

Also, he makes me feel guilty for having certain . . . feelings for Colin. I always wonder if Danny would approve. Would he want me with Colin? Or would he have fought like hell to ensure Colin and I never happened?

It doesn't matter. Danny isn't around, and Colin and I are never going to happen. No matter how badly I want us to, he doesn't. Not really. He likes having me around. He likes counting on me being there as a sort of crutch for him when his emotions, his demons, get out of hand.

But he doesn't want me. Not in the way that matters most. Not in the way that I want him to.

So forget it. Forget us.

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