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WILD GIRLS

By Erica Abeel

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“**WILD GIRLS** is a novel about a few women rebels who came of age in the 50s with the Beats in Paris . . . and a Yoko Ono-based character in early 60s New York. More importantly, Erica Abeel IS a ‘wild girl’— she lived the life, these are her friends, and this is an insider’s peek into that world.” —Kevin Kwan, author of *Crazy Rich Asians*

What Happens When Three Women Rebel Against The Stifling Culture of the 1950s and 60s in America? Erica Abeel Explores The Consequences In Her Stunning New Novel WILD GIRLS.

Ever since the publication of her first book *Only When I Laugh*, Erica Abeel has been a keen observer of the lives of women and the societal constraints that often stand in their way of achieving deep personal and professional fulfillment. Mixing fact and fiction, her new novel **WILD GIRLS** (Texas Review Press, October 2016) interweaves a story about women rebels ahead of their time with an under-exposed slice of social history: the late 1950s and early 60s when the culture stood poised for enormous changes, the Beats were smashing taboos, and pioneers like Yoko Ono were expanding the boundaries of art.

Brett, Audrey, and Julia meet at an elite women’s college in 1954, connecting immediately through their ambition and contempt for the prevailing “niceness.” They are clearly light years ahead of the men they know who are steeped in the period’s conventions and freaked by women who want more in life than just marriage and family.

After graduation, Brett goes off to Paris to hang with the Beats, those legendary firebrands who changed the face of literature forever. When she becomes romantically involved with their kingpin, Allen Ginsberg, she feels she’s finally living life to the fullest. It doesn’t take her long, though, to realize that although the Beats may be rejecting standard American values, their approach to women is still typically 1950s. She returns to New York City where she

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struggles to write a memoir about her Paris experiences, supporting herself as an assistant at a cutting edge book publisher. But there, too, she learns that women are treated as less equal than men. As the 1960s start to bring a whiff of cultural change, the only woman she knows who is truly able to overcome the constraints of their time is an avant-garde artist reminiscent of the real-life Yoko Ono. Some of the funniest scenes in **WILD GIRLS** revolve around the mayhem she creates.

Meanwhile Audrey and Julia are following their own unique paths. Audrey decides that she too will become a writer, and her tales of working girls in the city become bestselling novels. Although successful in her work, on a personal level, she pays a heavy price for defying period codes. Her unconventional relationship – living as the wife-in-all-but-name of a married man – has dire consequences.

Julia, on the other hand, follows a more conventional path, abandoning her dreams of becoming a photographer and opting instead to make marriage her real “career”. But she too must face the negative effects of her decision as her husband’s secret life threatens to destroy them both.

These three friends are the standard-bearers of women’s right to live any way they choose – to enjoy successful careers, to express themselves freely, to become wives, mothers, and lovers – carving their own unique paths to happiness. Erica Abeel portrays them as revolutionaries ahead of their times. But are these “wild girls” really that much different from today’s “girls” as depicted by writers and film-makers like Lena Dunham? Perhaps the times have changed, but readers will recognize that the challenges faced by Brett, Julia, and Audrey remain relevant. This is what makes **WILD GIRLS** a true tour de force. Erica Abeel has written about the dilemmas that women face with wisdom, humor, and a wicked eye for the ironies of existence. Her message is timeless.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erica Abeel, author of **WILD GIRLS**, is a novelist, journalist, and former dancer, who has published five books, including *Women Like Us* (a Book of the Month Club selection), *Only When I Laugh, I’ll Call You Tomorrow and Other Lies Between Men and Women*, and *Conscience Point*. Based in New York and Long Island, she writes about women rebels who dared to live against the grain before the upheavals of the 1960s and shows how their lives unfold over subsequent decades. Her articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Esquire*, and *Ms*, among many other publications and websites. In addition, Abeel reviews films and interviews directors for *The Huffington Post* and *Film Journal International*. For more information, visit: www.ericabeel.com