

Dear Reviewer:

Try to imagine the surreal plunge—you are a vibrant, energetic 24-year-old woman, a Phi Beta Kappa type-A student at NYU law, happily juggling a new romance and a heavy work load, when suddenly you find yourself blacking out, temporarily blind, and suffering from a 60-year-old man’s ailment—a failing heart. Dieting and exercise won’t cut it; it’s heart transplant or die.

Then, you face a new, unrelenting danger: transplant-related death. The medicines that keep your body from attacking your new heart are also poisons, and you must white-knuckle your way through innumerable heart biopsies that monitor your health. Further, your heart—if not rejected—comes with a ticking ten-year life expectancy.

Are you happy to be alive, or maybe...not so much?

SICK GIRL (Grove Press; October 2007; US \$24.00/CAN \$29.95), written by Amy Silverstein, is a riveting, keenly observed, wryly humorous look at full-throttle life-threatening disease, a “crazy kind of amazing” medical miracle, and a sweet love story. In her debut book—an October Borders Original Voices selection and picked for the BEA Editors Buzz Forum—Silverstein portrays her quest for life on her own terms with grace, wit and insight.

“Don’t let me die! I love my Scotty.” Fully conscious as the defibrillator paddles descend to shock her diseased heart back to a more stable rhythm (and leave reddish outlines in the shape of children’s shoes on her chest), she journeys back from death (What, no light?), marries (ducking into the coat check room at the Pierre mid-reception to take her dose of cyclosporine), finishes NYU law school, and passes the bar exam (bleeding heavily through all 6 hours—her transplant meds wreck her menstrual cycle). She wonders, can she wear the beautiful sparkly earrings Scott bought her enough times in the 8 years she has left to make his purchase worth it?

In **SICK GIRL**, among the topics Silverstein explores are:

- the complex dance of patient-doctor communication, evasive white-coat white lies, flat-out lies, and frank discussions, alike;
- the terrible price paid for dumbing herself down and how smart, savvy patients create themselves;
- living as a sick person, always on the edge of a medical emergency that she hides from her young son and friends, and often, even Scott;
- medicine as a best-guess, not an exacting science, and
- the redeeming power of love and ultimately, of life.

Mystifying her doctors and specialists, Silverstein’s transplant far surpasses its “warranty date.” Experiencing an unheard-of and ever-tenuous longevity without additional transplants, she discovers the secret that allows this sick girl to bear the uncertainty along with her life-sustaining, tortuous immunosuppressive regimen and return to her truer self.

A bold, unforgettable self-portrait that is searing, endearing, and heartbreakingly funny, **SICK GIRL** forever changes your perspective on life, health, and medicine. We look forward to speaking with you about the fresh voice of Amy Silverstein and **SICK GIRL**.

Best,
Sandi Mendelson