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**“Feisty, insightful, improbable...Silverstein has cheated death to thrive in her post-transplant existence and to write about it with incredible courage, determination, self-scrutiny, and verve.”**

*- Elle*

**“[Silverstein's] unsentimental humor and spitfire response to mortality help [her] deal with a ‘time-bomb heart’ that has kept on ticking for (20) years. With apologies to Adlai Stevenson, it’s not always better to light a candle; sometimes you need to curse the darkness, too.”**

*- O, the Oprah Magazine*

**“A revelation. I couldn’t stop reading it.” - U.S. News & World Report**

**“[A] compelling memoir...you’ll be rooting for her next 20 years.” - People**

**“[A] tour de force memoir.” - Good Housekeeping**

**“[A] mesmeric human drama of living life as a heart transplant recipient . . . a superb writer with a wry, biting sense of humor, Silverstein is a natural raconteur with a story so compelling readers won’t want to put this book down.”**

*- Library Journal (starred review)*

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# **SICK GIRL**

By Amy Silverstein

*Coming in paperback from Grove Press in October 2008*

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An award-winning memoir, Amy Silverstein’s **SICK GIRL** (Grove Press; Paperback; October 2008; \$14.00) has garnered tremendous attention, inspired rave reviews, generated impressive sales, and ignited controversy since its 2007 release, putting Amy at the center of an ongoing debate on patient rights, the omnipotent power of doctors, and the nuances of living with

chronic illness. Beginning with the onset of her symptoms when she was twenty-four years old, **SICK GIRL** chronicles Amy's "crazy kind of amazing" medical miracle, a journey of nearly two decades, from the first misdiagnosis to her astonishing ongoing life after heart transplant, in spite of a ten-year post-surgery life expectancy. Written with force and honesty, Amy's gripping and provocative book presents a patient's perspective that allows the reader to live the extraordinary story alongside her—an unforgettable experience that is utterly compelling.

In a new Afterword included in this paperback edition, she discusses the debate sparked by the publication of **SICK GIRL** in hardcover, addresses her critics, and shares her thoughts after "removing the mask from the miracle" and being alive 20 years post transplant. A surprisingly irreverent and occasionally fierce narrator, her bold, unforgettable self-portrait will forever change your perspective on life, health, and medicine.

Amy Silverstein was your typical type-A law student: smart, driven, and highly competitive. Adroitly juggling a budding romance and a heavy academic schedule, Amy did not have time for illness—even one that caused violent and erratic heartbeats, shortness of breath, blackouts, and temporary blindness. When her family doctor suggested that her symptoms were due to stress and diet, she was more than happy to drop a few classes, think calm thoughts, and eat fistfuls of salt. At such a young age, vibrant and energetic, how could she have guessed that her heart was about to fail?

With grace and wit, in her debut book **SICK GIRL**, Silverstein chronicles her astounding medical journey, experiencing an unheard-of and ever-tenuous longevity without additional transplants—she has healthily surpassed her doctors' life expectancy predictions by more than ten years. Distrustful of her doctors and insistent in her refusal to be the "grateful heart patient" she is expected to be, Silverstein presents a point of view that is truly eye-opening and sometimes shocking.

"What happened to me demonstrates that there are illnesses that can outsmart and outperform even the best doctor gods," writes Silverstein in her riveting, keenly observed, wryly humorous look at a full-throttle life-threatening disease.

Told she is a "sick girl" by her physician, Silverstein makes every effort to live as a "normal" person, despite immunosuppressive medicines that are actually poisons that keep her body from attacking her new heart and the unrelenting danger of transplant-related death. Her remarkable account is made all the more dramatic by the deliriously romantic bedside courtship

with her devoted boyfriend, Scott (now her husband), and a single, uncompromising desire. Although two cardiologists render definitive *nos* on the issue of pregnancy, no one ever told her she could not be a *mother*. For Silverstein, her miracle and the heart of her recovery is a baby boy.

Among the topics Silverstein explores in **SICK GIRL** are:

- The pressure felt by the chronically ill always to smile and harbor unwavering optimism; the costs and benefits of wearing a mask of wellness in front of family and friends when her medical reality is quite different;
- Heart transplantation as more than just a simple miracle—an eye-opening, firsthand account of the nuances and complexities of heart transplant life through the eyes of a 20-year recipient.
- The duality of living sick, scared, and exhilarated since the age of 24—the conflict between deep appreciation for her astounding good fortune in being alive, and acknowledging how tough it is to live in a heart-transplant body;
- The complex dance of patient-doctor communication—evasive white-coat white lies and frank discussions, alike;
- The terrible price paid for dumbing herself down, the miscalculation of risk, how smart, savvy patients create themselves, and how to be a self-advocating patient who is a 50% partner with the doctor;
- How patients think—about physicians as “friends” or not, a tremendously intimate relationship with limits;
- The promise and power of motherhood and how significantly it changed her life;
- Medicine as a best guess, not an exacting science;
- Organ transplant winners and losers and the mind-bending delicate balance between being sick enough to receive what you need in order to live and living long enough to receive what you’ve been waiting for; the emotional aspect of the fair and regulated distribution of organs.

A riveting memoir, **SICK GIRL** is fundamentally about relationships—between patient and doctors, wife and husband, mother and son, sick friend and well friends—and how all these strengthen or shatter under the pressure of a freakish illness. Buoyant and ultimately triumphant, Silverstein’s is a compelling and courageous new voice that will stay with you long after you have turned the final page of **SICK GIRL**.

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**About the Author:**

**Amy Silverstein**'s new heart has been beating strong for twenty years, despite a ten-year prognosis. After practicing law and performing music, Silverstein has discovered a new passion, writing. She serves on the board of directors of UNOS (United Network of Organ Sharing), a federally contracted transplant network, and was recently elected to the UNOS executive committee. Her highly acclaimed 2007 memoir *Sick Girl* was winner of the Books for a Better Life award and a finalist for the Borders Original Voices award. *Sick Girl* was the first book ever serialized by *U.S. News & World Report*; the flood of reader response that followed was unprecedented in volume for any *U.S. News* health story, ever. Amy lives with her husband and son in New York.

**SICK GIRL** By Amy Silverstein

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